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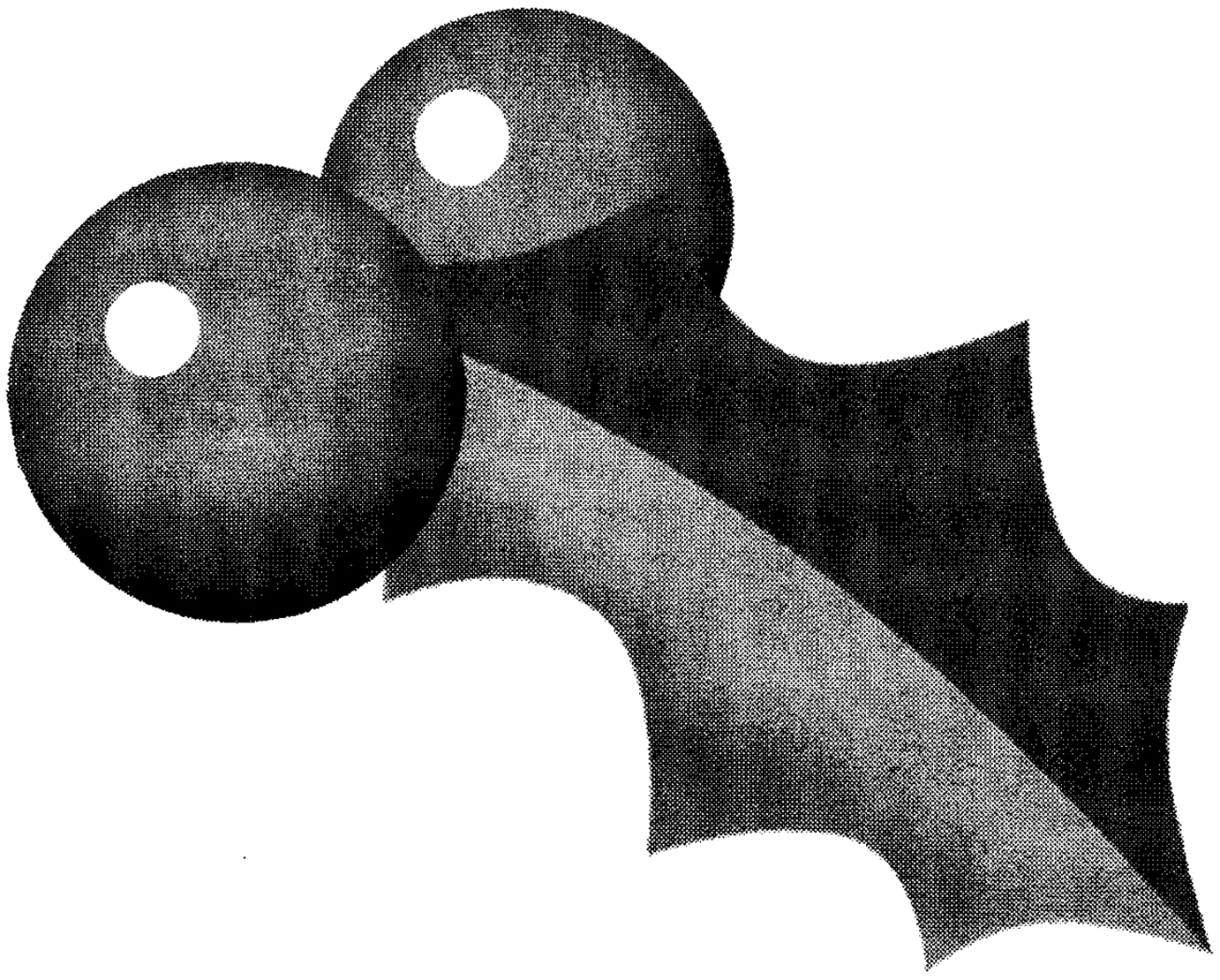

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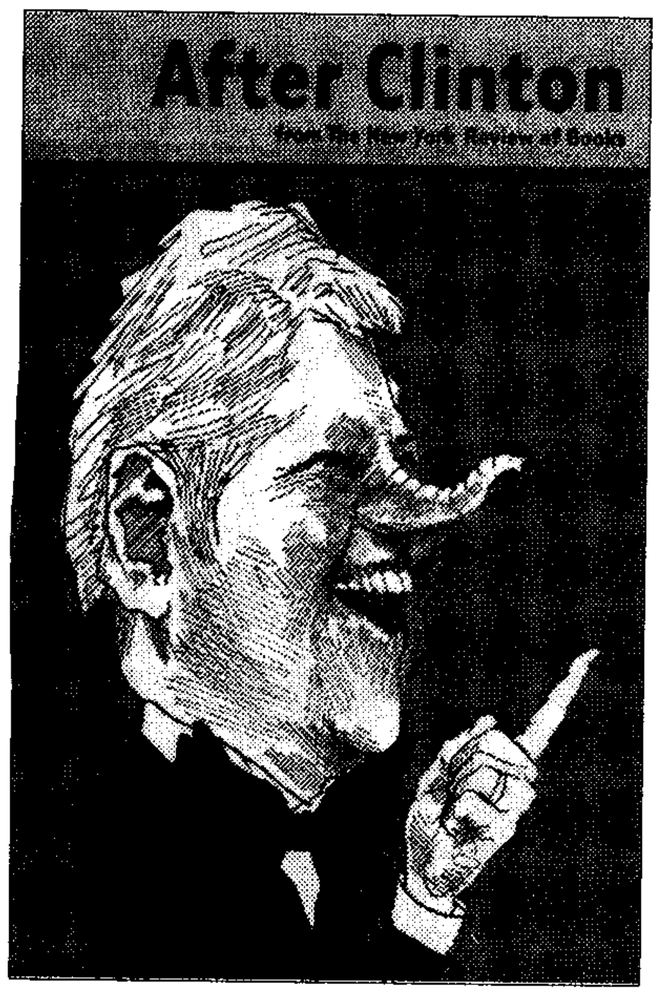

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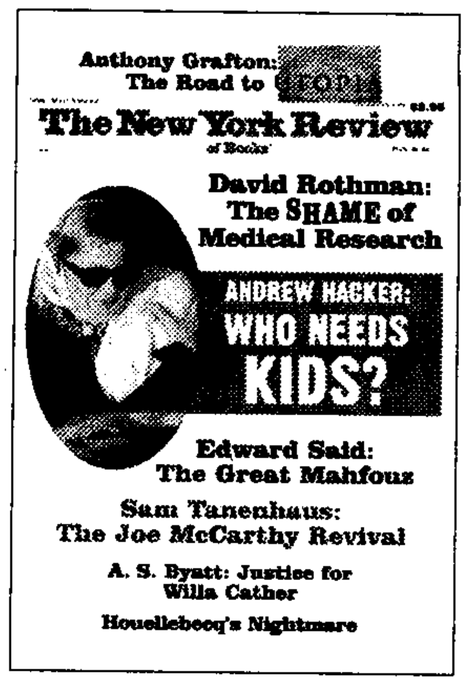

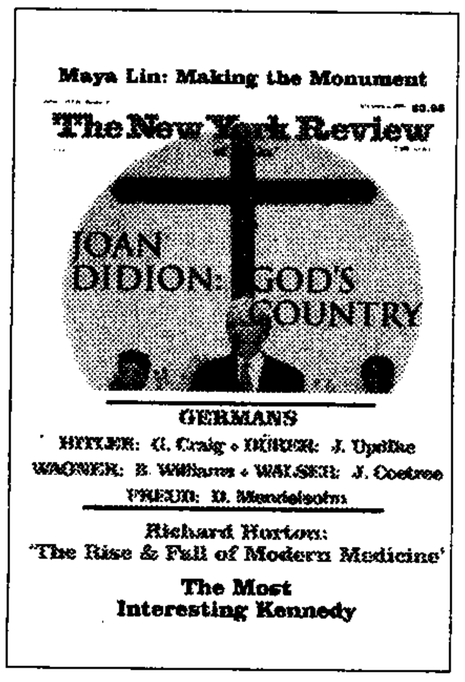

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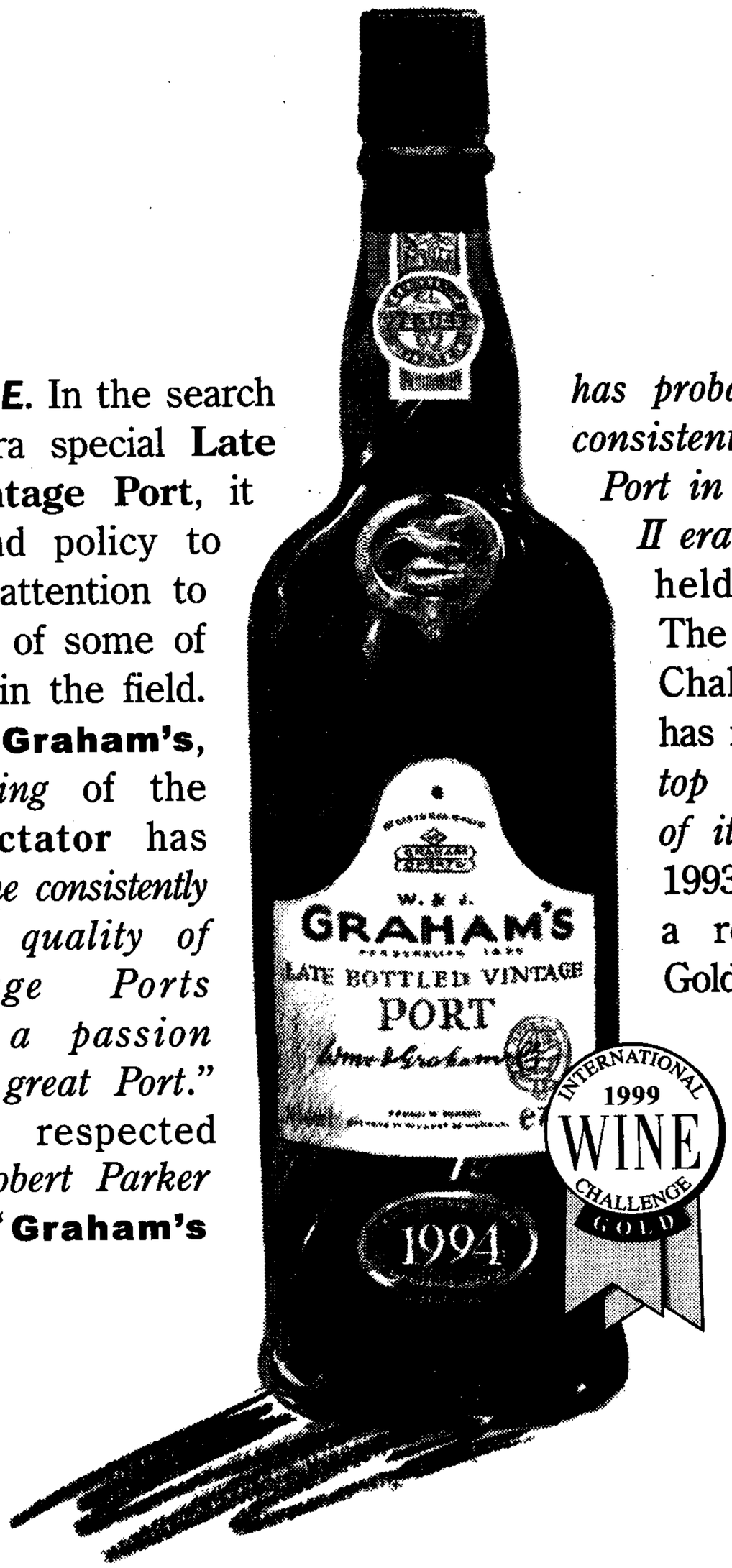

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O·B·N

Now I can see that I had witnessed a once-in-a-lifetime phenomenon. Like someone who heard Sinatra sing in the 1950s or watched John McEnroe play tennis in the 1980s, I had seen a maestro at the height of his powers. Clinton was the Pele of politics, and we might wait half a century to see his like again.

JONATHAN FREEDLAND, The Guardian
Nominated by Rael Martell.

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Financial Times 28 October

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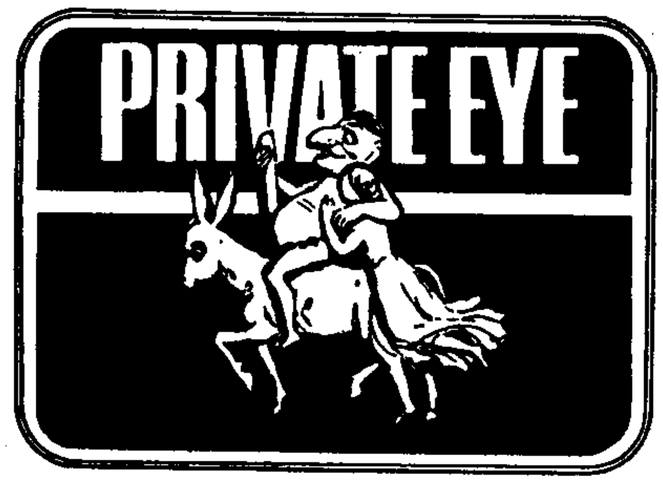

101 Uses For A Dome

Flood Barrier

VICTIMS of the floods might be wondering why the Queen hasn't been out in her wellies to sympathise with her sodden subjects.

In fact, Brenda was more than willing to do a quick tour of some of the worst hit areas and shake a few hands. But it was Downing Street that politely declined her offer, pointing-out that even an informal royal visit might hamper essential recovery work.

The Queen's aides took the point and agreed. So they weren't best pleased to turn on the TV news 24 hours later only to see pictures of the Rev Blair visiting the sodden victims of the floods...

THE floods have so eased the pressure on Railtrack that chief executive Gerald Corbett felt confident to go on the offensive over the Hatfield crash, blaming freight trains for the hairline cracks in rails instead of his company's own abysmal failure to maintain the tracks properly (using the money it bleeds from freight and passenger operators).

In fact only *two* freight trains – both empty – used to run through Hatfield each week, and usually not on the high-speed track which broke.

The rail freight industry was so incensed it issued a press release saying: "It is extraordinary that Gerald Corbett should speak in this way about some of his company's major customers. This confirms our view that Railtrack is not fit, in its present state, to operate the network."

COULD one of the reasons why Railtrack is now faced with replacing hundreds of miles of track be a review carried out in conjunction with a firm of consultants shortly after Corbett took over as chief executive, codenamed "Project Destiny"?

The conclusion of Project Destiny was that Railtrack could save money by pursuing a "patch and mend" policy instead of spending large sums on renewing its assets as originally planned. And who were the kindly consultants who aided and abetted this cool commercial reasoning? Step forward William Hague's old firm, McKinsey .

INSPIRED perhaps by Stagecoach threatening to sue its passengers (*Eye* 1009), Connex recently threatened to have some of its human cargo arrested (and presumably charged) for the crime of asking for information.

Passengers on a Connex South Eastern train from Victoria to Canterbury last month were treated to a panoply of excuses — adverse weather, speed restrictions, failure to locate the driver — before the train was abruptly terminated at Faversham. There was no explanation or advice for the hundreds of passengers. The only member of staff in uniform knew nothing but was persuaded to telephone a Connex manager at another station. He was promptly instructed by the manager to tell the fuming Connex customers that if the situation "got any worse" he would call the police to sort them out.

BAD-TEMPERED passengers travelling first class on the Great North Eastern Railways train which took 7½ hours to travel from Newcastle to London on 2 November were pacified by profuse apologies over the tannoy for the inconvenience and lack of tea.

The bright spark who dreamed up this public relations coup forgot one vital detail, however. The calming words directed specifically at first class passengers were also broadcast into the second class cattle trucks, to the derision and frustration of the crammed masses.

IT HAS been an exciting few weeks for Andersen Consulting. They have finally separated from their accountancy brothers in Arthur Andersen and celebrated the fact by choosing a new name, "Accenture", a combination of the words Accent and Future. They will pay £126m to advertise the new name.

Andersen is certainly more interested in the future than the past: its renaming coincided with the revelation that problems created by delays introducing their NIRS2 computer system means the Inland Revenue were destroying one million unresolved tax records.

ALTHOUGH Sir Paddy Pantsdown's diaries have been published to a universal chorus of yawns, it seems that the great statesman still has a high opinion of their worth. He is pressing on with his claim for damages from the *Sunday Telegraph*, which last year published a draft version of the diaries, including "minutes" of his chummy chats with the Rev Blair.

Pantsdown is suing for breach of copyright, alleging that the *Telegraph* story reduced the value of his magnum opus. The *Telegraph* maintains that its piece was no more a breach of copyright than, say, all those leaked memos from Philip Gould and Tony Blair which appeared a few months ago.

If the case ever comes to court, it may shed light on one hitherto unexplained mystery: how did the *Telegraph* obtain the Pantsdown papers? And the answer could be rather embarrassing for Paddy, who prides himself on his close relationship with No 10.

Ashdown's own copy of the minutes remained under lock and key. But the *Eye* has learned that he'd also sent a set to the prime minister as a courtesy. Shortly afterwards, they found their way to the *Telegraph* and were splashed all over the front page. Could it be that some senior figure in Downing Street passed them on, with the deliberate intention of sabotaging Pantsdown's book? If so, what price Paddy's much-vaunted "partnership" with the Dear Leader?

● *Rain on the tracks: Dr B. Ching* 6
● *Gush and Bore: Mark Steyn's America* 7
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● *As any fuel no: Truth about trucks* 9
● *The Weakest Link: TV Eye* 10

NEWS

RAINTRACK

THE recent deluge was a disaster for thousands of homeowners – but pure manna from heaven for Railtrack.

Suddenly the company could blame God for the chaos on the railways and the public would be none the wiser. The concept of floods gave Railtrack days of unimpeded access to some of the tracks to carry out maintenance normally squeezed in to a few hours on a Saturday or Sunday night.

English Welsh and Scottish Railways, the main operator of freight trains, cancelled 400 trains out of 1,000 in the first week of floods because Railtrack failed to provide tracks for them. According to Railtrack, 399 of the cancellations were due to bad weather and, er, just one was due to defective track. Of course there is no link between those figures and the fact that Railtrack pays no compensation for problems attributed to "acts of God".

Such sudden and comprehensive disruption could drive away freight customers for good, especially as it coincides with the chancellor's announcement of yet more subsidies to rail's cut-throat rivals on the roads. Railtrack reckons rail freight – which often gets in the way of nocturnal engineering work – does not pay. It would be glad to see the back of serial complainers like the Royal Mail.

For passenger operators the situation was not so serious. Passengers will return after the floods and the subsidies will keep flowing, as will compensation cheques for many of the trains they haven't run.

Hundreds of rail staff, especially frontline staff, have worked hard during the unprecedented chaos; but the situation is the worst indictment yet of the inflexibility of the privatised railway and of the rush by many firms to ditch hundreds of experienced staff.

The train operators can blame Railtrack and the weather, and as they won't be fined in either case there's no incentive for them to pull out the stops. Even if they were desperate to keep the trains running, many companies lack the middle managers and operations controllers needed to arrange diversions and keep the public informed. Middle managers were the first to go when bean-counting newcomers to the industry removed everyone who appeared surplus to requirements and anyone who was too experienced (and therefore on too high a wage). Untold damage is being done to the railways by the shift to casual labour and a company like Virgin Trains doesn't care. Virgin is now asking for people to work occasional days at main stations for £4.90 per hour, giving out information and "queue busting". Virgin dumped many experienced staff in its first year to avoid paying the senior British Rail wages.

The railway is a complex and esoteric world where it takes months, not hours, to gain safety competence and years to learn enough to "queue bust" and keep passengers informed. A railway reliant on casual and part-time workers, instead of career rail staff who take a professional pride in the job, is a railway that's bound to have safety problems and bound to leave passengers in a frustrating muddle when normal timetables break down.

THE misery suffered by rail travellers since Hatfield has not been shared by directors or shareholders of First Group, whose subsidiary ran one of the trains which crashed at Paddington a year ago.

The three rail companies of First Group have declared profits of £29.6m in the six months to November. Chairman Moir Lochhead told shareholders he was confident that the current problems on the railway would not lead to loss of business to other forms of transport. Not that he would mind very much if it did. First Group is the country's biggest bus operator.

'Dr B. Ching'

BRANSON PICKLE

A CURIOUS little missive from one Cherie Booth QC appears on the letters page of the London *Evening Standard*. "Matthew Norman has repeated the allegation that I once told Sir Richard Branson [at a Downing Street reception earlier this year] that the prime minister and I would 'do something' for him. The claim was originally made in a biography of Richard Branson by Tom Bower... I would like to make clear that no such conversation has ever taken place."

If Bower's damaging and widely reported allegation is untrue, one might expect Ms Booth QC to want a proper apology and retraction, rather than settling for a letter to the editor which most readers probably missed. Could it be that Cherie did indeed demand a grovelling and prominent apology? And that the *Standard* then spoke to several guests from the Downing Street reception who had heard her tell Beardie that "we must do something for you"? And that, on learning that these witnesses all confirmed Bower's story, she was forced to back down and settle for a brief letter buried on page 26? In a word... yes.

Meanwhile the high court is about to witness an entertaining preliminary skirmish in the libel battle between Branson and Bower, over an article in the *Evening Standard* suggesting that Beardie was unfit to run the lottery. The case itself isn't due to be heard until next spring, but at a two-day hearing on 20 and 21 November the Virgin King will apply to strike out most of Bower's defence.

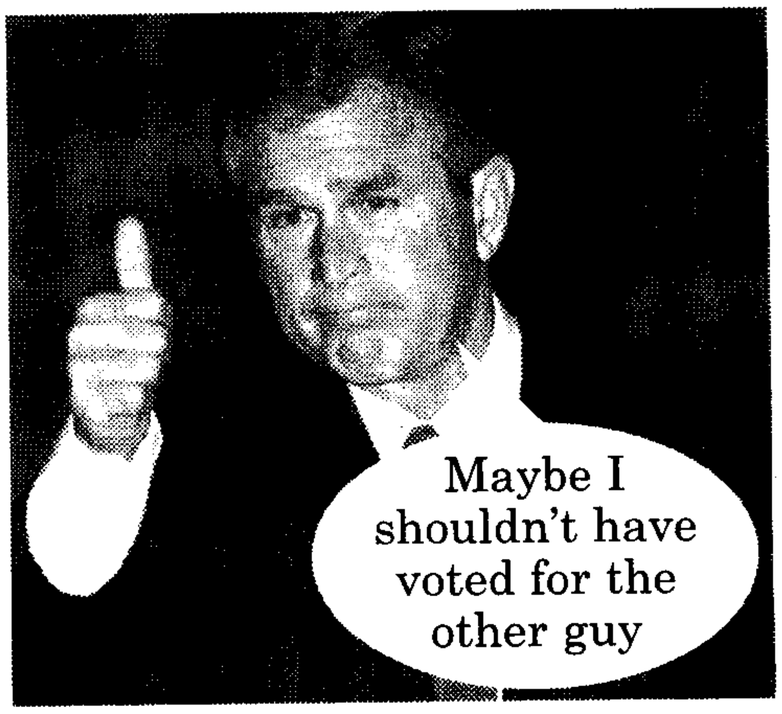
Branson argues that the action should focus on only one sentence in the *Standard* article, which accuses him of vindictiveness: anything else is irrelevant and inadmissible. Bower, on the other hand, insists that the piece must be read as a whole to understand why Branson shouldn't have the lottery licence. His lawyers will regale the court with a catalogue of allegations about Branson which they hope to include in their defence.

Since this will take place in open court and under protection of privilege, it can safely be reported without fear of a libel writ. But will the great philanthropist's Fleet Street cheerleaders, notably the *Times* and *Sunday Times*, bother to do so?

And will Lord Burns and his fellow lottery commissioners pay any attention? They are currently deciding whether Camelot passes their "probity test". But the facts to be aired in the high court next Monday and Tuesday must surely raise a few doubts about the "probity" of the man leading the People's Lottery bid.

True, Beardie was given a clean bill of health by Burns's predecessor, the ludicrous Dame Helena Shovelton. But, as the lottery commission confirmed to the *Eye*, milady Shoveoff paid no heed to Bower's revelations: not even to the many examples of Branson failing to keep promises. Dame Helena apparently felt that this had no bearing on whether one should believe Beardie's latest promises to raise squillions and zillions for "good causes", and to run a system which will be as supremely efficient and glitch-free as, er, Virgin Trains.

CLOSEST U.S. ELECTION IN HISTORY



POLICE 5

THE Connon family, whose quick thinking and bravery saved the life of Martin McGartland, who was shot six times outside his home by the IRA (see *Eyes passim*), have at last received an explanation from Northumbria police for the delay in getting officers and an ambulance to the scene.

For 20 minutes Peter Connon made increasingly desperate pleas for help to the emergency services as his family used socks, t-shirts and even cling-film to staunch McGartland's wounds. Despite Connon's assurances that the gunmen had fled, police had held back an ambulance until deciding it was safe to enter the area.

Acting assistant chief constable R.S. Jackson explained in a letter last month that armed response vehicles are deployed in pairs once "possible terrorist involvement" becomes known and "it is imperative that both crews are on the scene to provide cover to each other".

Which is curious... because weeks after the shooting a spokesman for Northumbria was still very reluctant to blame the shooting on terrorists. "We are keeping an open mind," he said. Newspapers meanwhile are now paying out large sums in libel damages to McGartland for highly damaging false claims made immediately after the shooting and purporting to come from the police – though Knacker denies it – that the shooting was drug related.

STREET OF SHAME

WHAT could have caused the recent catastrophic flooding? Global warming caused by vast eruptions of hot air from "experts" in our newspapers may well be a factor...

"A Europe-wide tax on petrol, oil, coal and other fossil fuels is needed urgently to reduce the threat of global warming," announced the *Times* (10 Nov). Er, so it's getting warmer is it? Not according to Angus Clarke, who had revealed in the same paper on 4 November: "We could soon be plunged into a new Ice Age."

"Global warming really does exist," warned Mary Kenny in the *Express* (3 Nov). Or it doesn't. As Peter Hitchens pleaded in the same paper three days later: "Can we please put a stop to all this drivel about global warming?... The world climate has shown no noticeable warming in the past 20 years."

The *Sunday Telegraph* couldn't even make its mind up how bad the weather has been. "There has been no wetter October for almost a century. October 1987 was equally wet, but in 300 years of rainfall recording in England and Wales the only October to bring more rain was that of 1903," it reported on page 44 on 5 November.

Page 16 of the same day's Review section disagreed. "Whatever the cause, global warming hasn't much to do with it: in spite of two serious bouts of flooding, last month did not even feature among the wettest 10 Octobers of the past two centuries." So now you know... Or don't.

THE responsibility of editing the *Scotsman* is clearly too much for Rebecca Hardy, the former *Daily Mail* hackette plucked from obscurity by Andrew "Brillo Pad" Neill.

She recently staggered into Edinburgh's exclusive Balmoral Hotel in the wee small hours, clearly the worse for the alcohol she had consumed in the course of the evening. The head barman immediately recognised La Hardy, who is a regular at the Balmoral, when she asked for a gin and tonic.

He politely explained that it was long after the time he could serve her. "What do I have to do to get a bloody G&T in this place?" she courteously inquired. The barman replied that she would have to book a room for the night. "How much?" she asked.

"£220," came the reply.

"Right, a room and a G&T," said the thirsty editor.

Plugged In

WELL, ALICE, THERE'S NOTHING ELSE WORTH WATCHING ON THE TV. SHALL WE GO UP TO BED?
YOU GO UP, BEN. I JUST WANT TO HAVE A QUICK LOOK AT SKY NEWS

Deidre's agony column, *The Sun*

Nominated by Martin Johnson.

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

IAN COWIE earns £60,000 a year for pontificating on personal finance in the *Daily Telegraph*. Last month he wrote a fulsome tribute to investment trusts, urging readers to put their money in "as soon as possible".

There were, however, some striking omissions from the piece. Cowie ignored the fact that investment trusts can fall further than defensive stocks in a bear market. Nor did he discuss such dud trusts as those in Pacific stocks, or the rash of new "junk trusts" that jumped on a slow but sure bandwagon. Instead he quoted Annabel Brodie-Smith from the Association of Investment Trust Companies, whose glamorous photo illustrated the article, reassuring punters that their money wouldn't be endangered by "stock-market volatility".

He forgot to add that the quotes from Brodie-Smith first appeared seven months ago in a booklet sponsored by the Association of Investment Trust Companies. And the author of the booklet was none other than, er, Ian Cowie – which may explain his boundless enthusiasm for investment trusts.

Meanwhile the *Daily Telegraph* has also been reticent, compared with other organs, about the crisis at Equitable Life. No doubt this is entirely unrelated to the fact that Equitable Life is still buying full-page ads in the *Daily Telegraph.*

RELATIONS between the ineffably grand *Sunday Telegraph* editor Dominic Lawson and his boss Dan Colson have never been quite the same since the unfortunate incident a few weeks ago when the paper's Comment editor, Mark Law, rang Colson on a Saturday afternoon to complain about the lack of hot food in the canteen.

Since Colson was in Sydney at the time (where it was two o'clock in the morning), he was understandably furious at the disturbance and rang Lawson to demand that the impertinent underling be disciplined – only to learn that the editor was not able to help at that moment because he was at home in Sussex "entertaining William and Ffion Hague".

Not the ideal time, then, for Lawson to seek any favours from the chief executive. Yet this is just what he's done, telling Colson that he would like "a proper job" – by which he means one that doesn't involve working on Saturdays – such as, say, the editorship of the *Daily Telegraph*. He even hinted to Colson that the *Times* were thinking of him to succeed the ailing Peter Stothard.

The chief executive instantly rang his counterpart at Wapping, Les Hinton, to ask if Dominic was being considered as a possible *Times* editor. Hinton's only reply was an incredulous guffaw. Feeling he had called Lawson's bluff, Colson picked up the phone again and called *Daily Telegraph* editor Charles Moore. "Charles, I've got Dominic here," he drawled. "He says he wants a proper job. Have you got a vacancy for him – something like gardening correspondent, for instance?"

THE *Sunday Times* has printed an unreserved apology for a story it published in June headlined "Charles Explores Scots Wedding". The story, which the paper acknowledged to be without foundation, was written by Christopher Morgan.

Morgan's story was a typical royal hack's piece of speculation dressed up as news, full of quotes from "friends of" and "a source close to" rather than direct denials from any of the main players. But what stung St James's Palace into demanding a retraction and apology was the implication that Charles's staff were looking into the possibility of a Scottish wedding without his knowledge.

The story appeared just a couple of days before the big royal bash to celebrate the Queen Mother's centenary which every paper (except the *Eye*) had wrongly said would be attended by Camilla Parker Bowles. That speculation had strained relations between Charles and the rest of the royals and when the Morgan piece landed on the breakfast table at Windsor there was an explosion.

Brenda demanded to know what Charles was up to, Philip recommended that he "see a shrink" and the wretched Charles sent his private secretary, Stephen Lamport, off to investigate. Lamport soon established that no one had had contact with the Church of Scotland other than to arrange Charles's visit to its general assembly as the Queen's representative. It was the fact of this contact that gave Morgan the slender peg on which to hang his "story".

WHILE *Sindie* editor Janet Street-Porter was in New York two weeks ago with her dear friend Sir Elton John, deputy editor "Mad" Michael Williams seized the chance to attack one of the paper's own columnists, Salman Rushdie.

Egged on by Williams, *Sindie* hacks Sophie Goodchild and Robert Mendick reported that several Asian peers wanted the government to withdraw Rushdie's Special Branch protection now that he seemed to be spending most of his time in America.

The great novelist promptly demanded an apology and a right of reply, in which he denounced Goodchild and Mendick by name for their "woefully inaccurate" story. But Mad Mike stood firm, insisting that he backed his hacks – even if this meant losing a columnist. Rushdie was free to write a piece answering the Asian peers, but he couldn't be permitted to "shoot the messengers" by rubbishing Goodchild and Mendick, who had merely been doing their jobs.

This staunch defiance began to wilt after Janet Street-Porter returned to the office the following Friday, when she revealed that she valued Sir Solomon Rushton's column and was desperate to placate him. Even so, Williams assured the hacks that they would not be named in Rushdie's reply.

On arriving for work the next day, however, they noticed that their names were still there. A showdown with the editor was delayed because Street-Porter had decided to spend Saturday morning at the hairdresser (something of a first for a Sunday newspaper editor). Meanwhile the cowardly Williams executed a smart U-turn, screaming at Goodchild and Mendick that they had let the paper down "and let me down".

Their names were eventually removed on Saturday afternoon – though only because the *Sindie*'s lawyer warned that the piece was defamatory, and because the journalists' lawyer threatened to apply for an injunction. (This too would have been something of a Fleet Street first: a newspaper injuncted by its own hacks.) But the damage was done. News editor Barry Hugill promptly resigned in disgust, accusing Mad Mike of blaming the hacks for writing a story which he'd encouraged them to do in the first place.

Hugill's departure has precipitated an interesting reshuffle. His job at the *Sindie* has been taken by Dave Randall, and Randall's old post as news editor at the daily *Independent* goes to one Adam Leigh.

Not long ago Leigh was a humble sub-editor at the *Birmingham Post*. But soon after Simon Kelner arrived as editor-in-chief of the *Indie* and *Sindie* Leigh came to London and began a rapid rise through the ranks. By happy coincidence, he happens to be Kelner's nephew. By another happy coincidence, one of the hackettes who will come under Leigh's command is Kate Watson-Smyth, aka Mrs Adam Leigh. It will also be recalled that Kelner's wife Karen worked at the paper until her hubby began a torrid affair with cartoonist Sally Ann Lasson, yet another *Indie* contributor.

Morale at the *Indie* may be at rock-bottom, but at least it's all one big family.

HACKWATCH

Mark My Words

TO ANY sane observer, it had long been obvious that the American presidential election might be (in the cliché-of-the-year) "too close to call". But this didn't stop some reckless observers from calling it.

Take Mark Steyn, chief American columnist for the *Telegraph* and *Spectator*. Until a few years ago he wrote almost exclusively about Broadway musicals, but then reinvented himself as a political pundit. Conrad Black regards him as a genius; and a glance at Steyn's oracular pronouncements this year reveals why.

28 January: "How about this for November 2000? A diminished Bush emerges from the primaries and loses narrowly to Gore; Hillary's steely glamour sees her through in New York; the Dems seize the House."

15 September: "Bush will survive the debates, and win on 7 November. Of the 538 electoral-college votes, he'll get at least 378... Now a lot could happen between now and November, including various 'October surprises' from Slick Willie. But I figure my prediction can withstand pretty much anything this side of a Third World War."

29 September: "As readers may recall, two weeks ago I predicted that Dubya would win the presidency with 378 of the 538 electoral college votes. To be honest, I'd been hoping he'd stay behind until November 5, and I'd look like a genius. But, unfortunately for me, he's already taken a slight lead in the daily tracking numbers and has a six-point edge over Al Gore."

14 October: "According to my most recent poll, Bush has locked up or is leading in states worth 265 electoral-college votes, while Gore is way behind with only 104... Al is heading for a total blow-out... Bush is on course to win big."

20 October: "According to my survey, a dozen Democratic states have slipped away from Gore. If this keeps up, he'll be left with only Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Hawaii and the District of Columbia."

22 October: "The official polls show the race as being still 'too close to call'. My own unscientific poll shows George Dubya Bush is already there: as of now, of the 538 electoral-college votes, I figure Bush has 301, Gore has 165 (which is pretty much what he'll have on the morning of November 8)."

28 October: "A week and a half to go in a race the US media say is still 'too close to call'. CBS and the *New York Times* even managed to conduct a four-day poll which claims that Al Gore is benefiting from 'day-to-day upticks' to the point where he now has 'a bare edge over Mr Bush'. The Texas governor, according to the *Times*'s analysis of its polling data, 'still inspires discomfort'. Hmm. Not half as much discomfort as he'll be inspiring on the morning of 8 November in the *Times*'s collective bottoms...I don't want to be sitting up all night waiting for a cliffhanger result from Hawaii. So here's my prediction: on 7 November, Bush will win 40 states – including the *soi-disant* 'toss-up' Florida, plus such reliably Democratic turf as Maine, Oregon, Washington and West Virginia."

5 November: "Final score? Bush 50 per cent, Gore 45 per cent."

11 November: "By George, he did it!...It was touch and go [on election night] until 2.20am."

12 November: "George Dubya Bush will take office as the weakest president in 125 years – if he takes office. Right now, I wouldn't bet on it."

LUVVIES

Believe me, I know the kind of commitment, both emotional and physical, that an actor has to give to a West End run and, after braving the horrors of a press night, the prospect of facing another personal firing squad should the play fail, will, I fear, eventually turn actors away from the stage for ever.

JENNY SEAGROVE, *The Independent*

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

IN THE TEAROOM

THOUGH Joe Public is well aware that hardly a week passes without eurobores from both sides droning on in the media about Britain's future in Europe, Number 10 has somehow convinced itself that for the past three years this has been a private dispute conducted by Mandy and Gordon behind closed doors, and that none of us has overheard the rumpus within.

Oddly William Hague has chosen to play along. This week he rolls out the Tories' new corporate livery along with a list of seen it-, heard it-, caught-the-repeat policy pledges. There is, conceivably, somewhere in darkest rural England one voter who does not know yet that the Tories are in favour of more coppers, keeping the pound, fewer educationalists, being tougher on refugees and re-packaging the pensioners' winter fuel allowance so it looks like a rise – but it does seem a bit stiff to make every local association shell out five and a half grand for leaflets just on the off chance.

The livery itself is proving divisive. Out goes the torch of liberty, in comes the "new wave". There has been anxious hand-wringing over what colour the wave should be. Since the departure of Ivan Massow, there hasn't been much call for pink. But one of the more right-on Central Office inclusivists was keen on something black and green and red – alluding vaguely to Caribbean flags or Nelson Mandela's shirt. Despite its faint suggestion of political cowardice, they eventually settled on yellow. This, claim the colour consultants, is the hue of "originality".

And there will be something strikingly new about Michael Portillo's role in the coming campaign(s). In the old days the Labour opposition would make spending pledges and face-out the awkward question of where the money would come from. This time the Tories will be promising to spend less and will have to face-out taunting questions about where the cuts will be made. It's by no means a sure-fire winner. But you have to admit – it's original.

'Urquhart'

IN THE absence of editor Peter Stothard, it seems the *Times* has become so craven towards "new" Labour it will bend to even the gentlest breeze from Downing Street.

The latest victim of the New Sycophancy is the exotic Andrew Pierce, the paper's assistant editor. Having fingered the Rev Blair's chief of staff Jonathan Powell as "the Downing Street poisoner" – the man who put the venom into Mo Mowlam – he was threatened with writs from Messrs Sue Grabbit and Runne. Not to worry, he thought: it was hardly a new allegation, after all. Several other papers had said the same.

To the lawyers' delight and surprise, however, the *Thunderer* caved in at once: costs, apology and a thousand quid to the charity of Powell's choice – a cats' home, no less.

Meanwhile, the *Mail on Sunday* is made of sterner stuff. Facing the same threats, it stood its ground – and Powell's lawyers beat a hasty retreat. It seems that the paper has an on-the-record comment about the matter from one Frank Dobson, who would appear to know a thing or two about Downing Street poisoning.

THE government has just issued a list of corrections to its annual report, published in July. "'1,000 more nurses' should read '10,000 more nurses'…'monthly' to read 'annual' and '£50' to read '£65'…" The concern for accuracy is admirable, even if most of these adjustments are in the government's favour. Well done, Tony!

But other passages remain oddly uncorrected, notably the boast that "This year saw the opening of the UK Sports Institute, providing world-class facilities, coaching and support in Sheffield."

Sheffield residents will search in vain for this phantom building. As long ago as October 1999, Chris Smith announced that the institute would in fact be sited at UK Sport's headquarters in London; and since then nothing more has been heard of it.

LUGUBRIOUS former Labour sports spokesman Tom Pendry has bored generations of visitors to the Commons with his pompous claim that "it was I who first showed young Tony Blair around Parliament." Now the old rascal may be unwittingly set to perform another favour for the Dear Leader by helping propel Tony Blair's former researcher and Downing Street policy wonk James Purnell into his (Pendry's) seat at the next election.

The Dear Leader has done few favours for Pendry. Indeed, one of Blair's first acts was to appoint Tony Banks to the sports portfolio that Pendry had shadowed thanklessly for so long. Now though young Purnell has been making a number of forays into Pendry's Stalybridge and Hyde constituency; and it is claimed that he has been chaperoned around various dreary Tameside functions by council leader Roy Oldham. Pendry has still not made any announcement that he is to retire. Thus the way is opened for the possibility that he could make that decision at the eleventh hour, allowing Purnell to be shooed in by the party hierarchy without the bother of asking the local comrades first.

HEALTH secretary Alan Milburn's proposal to abolish community health councils (CHCs) has caused a minor revolt among the normally placid Blairites.

Milburn wants rid of CHCs as they give a voice to patients. He feels they could be better looked after by his new NHS trust-staffed "Patient Advocacy and Liaison Service" or "PALS". Well, "pals" to hospital managers, anyway.

First, the Greater London Assembly – including Blair loyalists Trevor Phillips and Toby Harris – unanimously voted against Milburn's proposal. Then Harris launched a critical debate in the Lords, and the normally loyal Blairite Patrick Hall, along with Lib Dem Mark Oaten, put down an early-day motion also critical of the CHC decision. Former CHC chair and MP for Northampton North Sally Keeble gave health minister Gisela Stuart a hard time over the proposed abolition at the all-party health group.

Milburn and Blair are now desperate to find MPs loyal on the issue. Step forward Lorna Fitzsimmons, who asked Milburn the most obsequious question possible on CHCs.

But why the rebellion? Could it be that the formerly loyal Blairites took the prime minister at his word? Only last September the PM was asked if he supported another early-day motion which congratulated CHCs. A Blair spokesman wrote back to say: "Unfortunately the prime minister is unable to sign EDMs, as they are a vehicle for backbench MPs to voice their feelings on an issue. However, in this case of course Tony agrees with every word of the motion."

NOT surprisingly there has been no rush of foreigners to take up "new" Labour's new rights of appeal, trumpeted by home secretary Jack Straw before the election, if they are refused a visa to visit relatives in this country.

Since the rights came in six weeks ago only one person has sought to challenge a decision. Perhaps the new £500 fee for an oral appeal or £150 for a written hearing (which were *not* trumpeted by Jack Straw before the election) have something to do with it.

Opponents to the "racist" fees – they impact primarily on black and Asian families – have pointed out that the chances of raising such a sum of money in countries where £500 is more than many earn in a year is virtually zilch, and then only the privilege of the very wealthy.

Opposition to the fees – introduced by regulation, not legislation – is now mounting in both the Lords and Commons. Peers of all political colours questioned the fees' legality and made clear their contempt for them while trying to have the regulations annulled earlier this month.

Unlikely alliances are now beginning to form in a bid to have the fees abolished. It's a funny old world when the likes of Lord Newton, once John Major's social sercurity minister, and Sir Teddy Taylor, hardly a voice for minority rights, are now championing the visitors' cause. Mind you, no one remembers any loud protests when the Tories abolished the right to appeal altogether in 1993.

"NEW" Labour ministers are notoriously keen to show their business-friendly faces – but none more so than than department of trade and industry under-secretary Kim Howells, who attended a meeting of senior business executives in Brussels last week.

Howells was guest speaker at the first European business conference on "building corporate social responsibility". Perhaps because he was so far from home and his Pontypridd constituency, the former militant student leader and union official neglected to mention his colourful history in the business-friendly resumé handed out to the assembled suits.

Although "Dr Howells" had experience of the mining and steel industries, there was no reference to his earlier incarnation as a firebrand research officer to the South Wales area of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Indeed Howells was determined to prove to his Brussels business audience that "new" Labour was now the party of business. Laying into the "bureaucratic" ways of the state, which he contrasted less favourably to the "dynamism of the private sector", he said: "We must shovel into the dustbin of history the dogma which says the state does this and the private sector does that."

But what dogma could Howells have been referring to? Surely not the type of dogma he once spouted as a card-carrying member of the Communist party – another fact not on his CV?

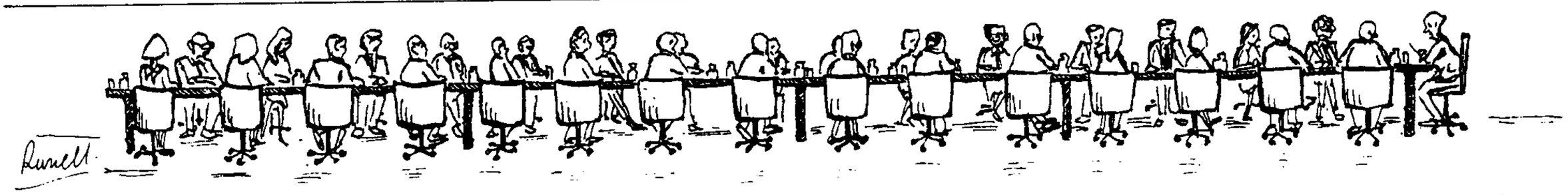
Number crunching

35,000

■ the number of jobs lost, according to Michael Heseltine, through Britain's failure to join the euro, inflicting "real hardship" on "households and families".

35,000

■ the number of jobs lost through Michael Heseltine's decision in 1994 to close most of what remained of Britain's coal industry, regardless of any hardship caused to households and families.



"Can I bring to order the nineteenth session of the committee to select members for the commission to investigate the growth of quangos"

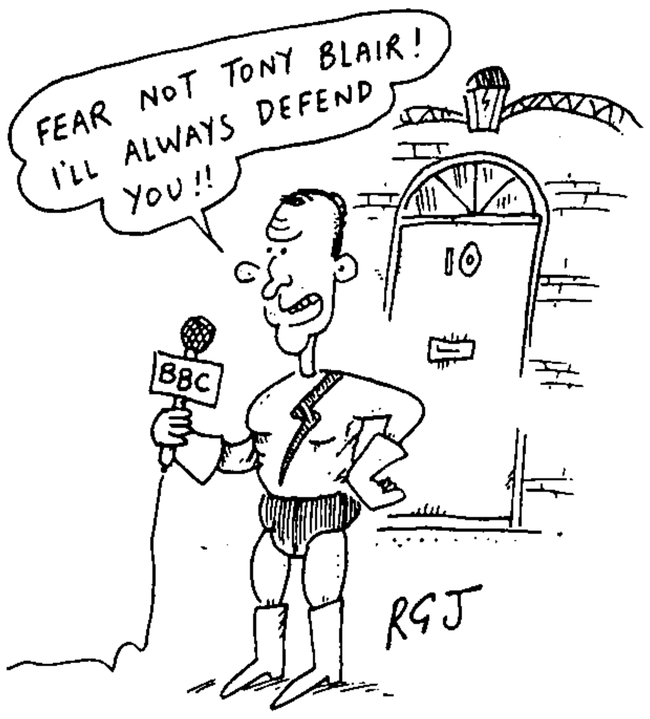
THE Curse of Gnome has struck again. Two months after accusing "Old Trout" (*Eye* 1008) of losing the plot on fish farming, Scotland's clueless fisheries minister "Red" John Home Robertson has been sacked.

He was given the boot in a cabinet reshuffle following Donald Dewar's demise, following into obscurity his principal civil service adviser, the illustrious George "why me?" Thomson, who fell on his sword (*Eye* 1012) in October.

Stepping into the breach is Rhona Brankin, MSP for landlocked Midlothian but appointed deputy rural development minister with special responsibility for fisheries. After barely a week in the job, she is already known as "Ms Flounder". Appearing before MSPs to answer questions on the salmon conservation (Scotland) bill, Ms Flounder relied on her minders to respond on her behalf.

Irritated beyond despair, Richard Lochhead, Scottish National party fisheries spokesman, suggested that if the minister was unable to answer his questions, perhaps she would prefer to ask the audience or "phone a friend".

New Superhero: Captain Marrvel



A TINY statuette of a mother and child commemorating the women of Greenham Common has caused an unlikely stir in the usually somnolent proceedings of the Welsh assembly.

When Tory leader Nick Bourne declared that the protesters were seen by many as deeply offensive, the other parties swiftly let it be known that they find Bourne far more offensive than any small bronze figurine on display in the foyer.

A choleric Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas, the assembly's presiding officer, called Bourne to order and demanded that he withdraw his comments, stating: "The word 'offensive' is an offensive one that we should not use here." Lord Elis-Thomas, now a happily-married pillar of the Welsh establishment, somehow failed to mention, however, that he was once the live-in lover of Marjorie Thompson, the willowy American chair of the CND during those confrontational years.

OPERA may no longer be a popular art, but it looks as though opera-buff Michael Portillo has not given up hope of winning the hearts of the masses.

The shadow chancellor was spotted at the glamorous Wexford Opera Festival watching a performance of Adolphe Adam's "Si j'étais roi" ("If I Were King"). If only!

BRUCE ROBINSON, the new top man in the Northern Ireland trade department, whose appointment as permanent secretary was announced on 8 November, will, among other duties, oversee quangos set up to attract jobs and investment to the province.

These include the Industrial Development Board (IDB), which earlier this year was savaged by a public accounts committee (PAC) report which found that a substantial number of the jobs promised by the IDB between 1988 and 1997 never materialised.

The PAC was also extremely critical of the "misleading information" and "contradictory and confusing responses" it received from the chief executive of the IDB. Who was the chief executive who came under so much fire? Step forward... Bruce Robinson!

'Backbiter'

KEN "Bullyboy" Gregory, West Midlands regional secretary of the GMB, has angered an employment tribunal so spectacularly he has brought contempt on his entire union. "Had an employer acted in the way this union did, we would expect that the union would have been up in arms about it," said the Leicester tribunal.

Gregory was cleared by an internal inquiry of allegations of staff bullying, intimidation and harassment. But he now faces a string of tribunal cases. Two have been settled, one costing the union more than six figures.

Last month's tribunal concerned eight longstanding brothers who, at Gregory's instigation, were expelled for submitting inflated hotel bills for the 1999 national conference. The union was allowing £53 per night per representative in a block booked hotel. The members found a less expensive hotel and submitted bills that were cheaper but which apparently included a proportion of their partners' accommodation.

The tribunal heard that before some of the brothers could account for their claims or remedy the situation, Gregory launched disciplinary proceedings on "vague charges". The brothers had little time to prepare a defence and were refused representation at their appeal. They walked out calling it a "kangaroo court".

The tribunal felt their expulsion was an extreme response, especially since they offered to repay any overclaim and the union was saving money over what it expected to pay. The members want reinstatement and compensation. But with six more tribunals in the pipeline, many members feel it is perhaps Gregory who should go.

'Blackleg'

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

IT seems very few people have read the Nice treaty which is due to be signed in three weeks' time – not even the UK's Europe minister Keith Vaz or foreign secretary Robin Cook.

On 7 November Vaz told parliament: "We do not support the idea, the concept or the proposal of an EU public prosecutor" (see *Eyes passim*).

Moments later Cook declared: "The right honourable gentleman will be relieved to hear that we are confident that we will keep to our bottom line..." But he refused to give safeguards against the proposed article 280A which gives a European public prosecutor and Europol police officers supreme power in member states.

The European commission, meanwhile, has closed its London library to the public and has not even sent its own proposals for the EU's first ever constitution to any of the public libraries on its network. Commission officials explained that since the document is not finalised it does not yet officially exist and is therefore only available to members of the foreign office.

Due to this lack of public library information on the proposed treaty, which includes articles to remove the voting rights of member states that do not conform, even librarians are in the dark about it all. "I'm not aware of the Nice treaty," said one from a central London reference library. "What is it?" "Did you say the MIS Treaty?" asked another. "When is it?"

The treaty is due to be signed in the first week in January when we are told by commission employees that the document will be available for the public to read. Hopefully Mr Vaz and Mr Cook will reflect on the Labour Euro-Safeguards Campaign Bulletin of May 1999 before signing anything. In trying to answer the question as to why £5bn of the EU budget (10 percent) was "misspent" each year, the campaigners reflected: "Traditions of honest and transparent government have never been established among the Union's institutions."

SION SIMON is not, as we stated in our last issue, Lord Levy's Media Training Adviser.

Lord Levy is a client of Clear Communications and although Sion Simon did work as a consultant for Clear Communications in 1997/8 he had no professional involvement with Lord Levy at the time or since.

WHAT A TRUCK UP!

THE Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), British chambers of commerce (BCC) and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) all forgot to look before they leaped on to the fuel protestors' bandwagon.

In demanding a cut in fuel prices to no more than 50p a litre by Christmas, the FSB showed that it hasn't yet grasped that road haulage is the handmaiden to global corporations. Over the past 20 or 30 years, thousands of small businesses have succumbed to competition from massive rivals, some of them hundreds or thousands of miles away. Greater economies of scale would not be enough to undercut local production in many areas were it not for the availability of cheap, plentiful and rapid freight transport.

Similarly the BCC, which wanted the government to cut hauliers' costs and quoted highly selective international comparisons, appears to have missed the connection between cheap haulage and the rapid growth of supermarkets and other chains. Those chains, many of them foreign owned or heading that way, have muscled in at the expense of local retailers and traditional town centres. British shopkeepers are also squeezed by mail order, first through catalogues and now through the internet; and here again the local supply chain might not be undercut if freight transport were not so cheap.

The CBI, which urged the government to address the problem for UK business of high (*sic*) road transport costs, seems not to have noticed British manufacturing being shut down because labour is cheaper on the other side of Europe.

Another class of small business hit especially hard by cheap haulage is the family farm, now almost an endangered species. Cheap haulage allows the supermarkets (whose rise to domination it has fuelled) to play farmers in one area off against those hundreds or even thousands of miles away, perhaps in countries with looser rules on animal welfare and food safety. Whether they like it or not, small farms are being frogmarched into the world of the multinationals and there can be only one result so long as cheap haulage makes transport costs insignificant to the big chains.

High fuel costs *are* a problem for rural dwellers. There aren't many production jobs left in the country where local people can earn the money to pay the going rate for fuel. Many of the abattoirs, dairies, meat-processing plants and timber yards which used to exist in rural districts have been hoovered out by big business – assisted by the selfish haulage industry. It is now cost-effective to move big volumes of raw materials from the countryside to centralised processing points instead of carrying the smaller volume of finished products from rural factories to urban markets.

If the "international community" is at all interested in combating environmental problems like global warming, it has to clamp down on the extravagant waste of fuel involved in trucking food, clothes and other goods thousands miles before they reach the consumer.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Editor's Note: Would readers please stop sending in the accompanying photographs highlighting the complete lack of resemblance between the e-fit released by police involved in the Jill Dando inquiry and the prime minister's press secretary, Alastair Campbell."

— *Eye* 976, 14 May 1999

"The prime minister's press secretary, Alastair Campbell, was interviewed by detectives investigating the murder of Jill Dando, the television presenter."

— *Sunday Times* front-page story, 12 November 2000

TV EYE

The Weakest Link: Champions League (BBC1)

"TREVOR, you are the weakest link. Goodbye." Not perhaps the most obvious catchphrase, but Anne Robinson will probably be hearing it from building site workers and small children until the day she dies. The whole world, it seems, has gone *Weakest Link* crazy. Newspapers can't get enough of it. Viewers are addicted to it. The BBC has a genuine popular success on its hands and its executives are all frantically scurrying around trying to take credit for it.

For *The Weakest Link* is that modern-day rarity – the decent BBC programme that is actually produced in-house. On BBC2 the daytime segments continue to outrate *Countdown*, an achievement previously considered impossible while Richard Whiteley was still alive. Hastily commissioned for primetime BBC1 – words that could never have been written in the Botney era – the not-very-convincingly titled "Champions' League" seems to be a match for everything ITV can throw at it. For Greg Dyke it must seem as though Christmas has come two months early, with Santa replaced by a tiny furious woman in glasses.

Opinion, of course, is divided on the merits of the ginger shrew. For some viewers – children, fans of *Watchdog*, men who like being beaten by twigs in their leisure hours – she *is* the show: a Demon Headmistress who shows no mercy. Some quiz purists, however, are less convinced. The rather pantomimic nature of her putdowns cannot wholly eradicate the suspicion that she doesn't know the answer to many of the questions. Not that she actually needs to, but it's an illusion that all the great quizmasters manage to foster (overweening arrogance usually does the trick).

Whereas Anne stumbles over questions and often struggles when someone gives an answer that isn't exactly the same as the one on the card. She seems to be much more interested in asking people why they nominated so-and-so for the push, or telling them that they're all useless because they have only won £500. Curiously enough these are the weakest links in the format. Everyone nominates a particular person for exactly the same reason – they didn't get enough answers right – and Anne's hectoring becomes tiresome after approximately 0.000002 of a second. But like *Millionaire*, the show is fundamentally strong enough to transcend its obvious flaws. According to all newspapers the BBC hopes to make £30m in rights and programme sales, a figure so instantly believable it can only have been made up.

"It's just toast I'm afraid... I've been watching cookery programmes all evening"

What this means for primetime TV, though, hardly bears thinking about. The new culture of fear that permeates British television has not had the most positive effect on the commissioning process. Once executives commissioned shows they thought people might want to watch. Now they commission shows people are already watching on the other side. Peter Salmon, the bouffant former controller of BBC1 (now settling into his new post as Chief Love Rat), wanted his own *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*, so he commissioned *The Syndicate*, a slightly shabby Bazal variant, which went out on BBC1 in the summer. But while *Millionaire* famously had 11 non-broadcast pilots, *The Syndicate* was given only one, so desperate was Salmon to bring it to the screen. It therefore arrived semi-formed, with the wrong host (Nick Ross), absurdly complicated rules and some of the most unappealing contestants ever seen on British television. It was about as hip as a side parting, and seems less likely to return.

For now everyone is having a go. All self-respecting indies are developing their own quiz formats, confident that all self-respecting channels will want one, just as they wanted their *Big Brother* clone, and something a bit like *Stars In Their Eyes*. Most of these shows will look and sound a bit like *Millionaire*, with blue sets, rotating lights and doomy music. They will have well paid hosts, who will have catchphrases. And they will drive us all mad.

The Weakest Link has opened the floodgates. Quiz shows could become the new docusoaps — cheap, plentiful, the easy option. Although, as the Chief Love Rat discovered, such fearfulness and lack of gumption can eventually cost you your job. If only Anne Robinson had been the one to break the news. "Peter Salmon, you are the weakest link.

Goodbye."

'Couch Potato'

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Annie Lennox Lewis

MEDIA NEWS

SO it's official. As predicted in the *Eye*, the Beeb is returning news and current affairs staff from White City to Broadcasting House.

The official line is that it won't cost licence-payers a penny. The unofficial line is that this is cobblers. Why, critics ask, won't the suddenly shy Tony "Head Prefect" Hall reveal the cost of his move away from BH in the first place – especially the magnificent fees collected by all his consultants and planners?

The move to Shite City has cost licence-payers £40m. That paid for a building likened by waggish staff to "a BMW showroom" and for "state-of-the-art" broadcasting facilities. It took months of falling off air to get it to work but, hey, it was brand new technology.

Hall described his new building as a triumph. "It symbolises creativity," he said. It will "attract and retain talent" and is "open and accessible" (particularly for loonies who might want to invade the newsroom, as it turned out). Furthermore, in four years it would save the cost of the move.

Now we're told that after a mere *two* years, all that "state-of-the-art" kit is "due for a refit", making – surprise, surprise – a move seem more necessary. The spinners insist that "it will still be in demand by other programme makers after news has moved out". But who will want to use less than the best, most modern facilities available? Especially facilities nowhere near the centre of town?

And how much was spent on the appalling vandalism at BH, also known as the open-plan Corporate Centre, where "work hubs" and raffia-work conversation pieces replaced the old studios? No one will comment.

THE so-called new Jarrow Crusade attracted a strange rag-bag of characters on its first leg from the north-east.

A Radio Five Live reporter told listeners that on its first day the fuel protest convoy had already dwindled to a handful of lorries followed by what appeared to be a disgruntled farmer who was driving a battered car and having trouble keeping up with the rest.

The disgruntled farmer was none other than top *Independent* hack Cahal Milmo, reporting from the scene in his aged Metro.

THE new BBC celebrity magazine *Star* aimed at those with a lower IQ than *Hello* readers, lists PR firm the Outside Organisation at the top of its role-call of employees.

Last year the shrinking violets at Outside took great exception to the *Eye's* description of their PR skills as "pisspoor" after their craven surrender to blackmail in the way they handled the *Sun's* outing of Boyzone star Stephen Gately.

This has not held the company back and its client list now includes Boydrone, the Spice Girls, David Beckham, Sir Elton John and, er, Nick Faldo. Predictably since the Beeb has put Outside on its payroll, *Star's* first issue contains a three page interview with Gately, while five pages are devoted to the fascinating thoughts of Boydrone's Ronan Keating.

ON THE day of the Hatfield train crash, when Channel Four news realised it had a reporter, Justin Rowlatt, actually on the train, editor Jim "Il Sung" Gray agreed with that day's programme editor that Rowlatt would produce a 3½ minute package for the evening news.

Later in the day Gray had a meeting with ITN editor-in-chief Richard Tait, whose response to the proposed item was how the hell can you get a man who's just been in a train crash to do a package?

Embarrassed at his own poor judgement, Gray decided to lay the whole blame for the idea at the feet of the hapless programme editor at the afternoon conference. The latter's protestations that earlier in the day Gray had been in accordance were met with the tactful response to shut up or "I will fucking brain you".

DUMB BRITAIN

Who Wants to be a Millionaire?, ITV

Chris Tarrant: Sir Edwin Landseer's painting "The Monarch of the Glen" is a painting of which animal?

Contestant: I think it's a dog, but I'll phone a friend, please, Chris.

University Challenge, BBC2

Jeremy Paxman: What is another name for "cherrypickers" and "cheesemongers"?

Contestant: Homosexuals.

Paxman: No. They're regiments in the British Army who will be very upset with you.

This Morning, ITV

John Leslie: At what time is *Midday Money* broadcast?

Contestant: 12.15.

Leslie: The Berlin Wall was demolished in which country?

Contestant: Er...

Leslie: East and West came together...

Contestant: Er...

Leslie: It begins with a "G".

Contestant: Er...

Leslie: No, I can't give you that one.

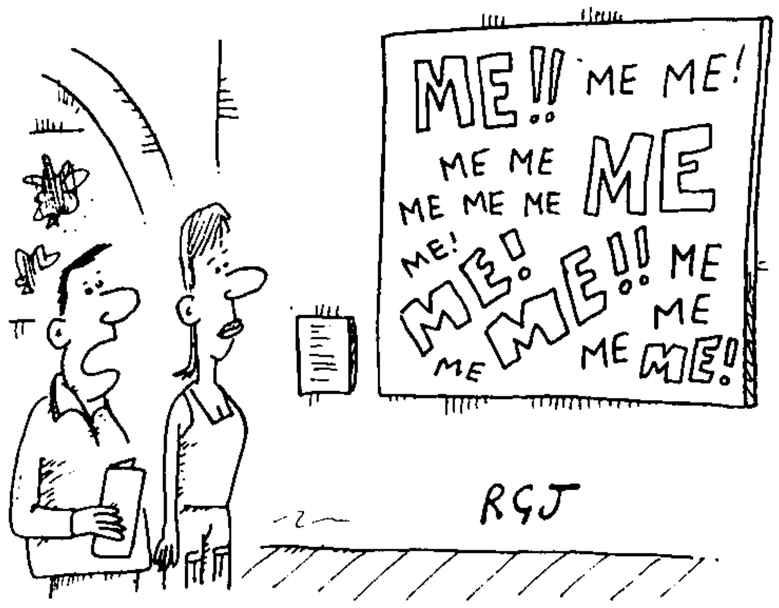
The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: What nationality was the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre?

Contestant: Italian.

Robinson: In history, at the battle of Waterloo, which general's horse was called Copenhagen?

Contestant: Lord Nelson.



"...and this won the Anthea Turner Prize"

FIFTEEN independent film-makers recently applied for company support grants to the Northern Production Fund (NPF), run by the Northern Arts Board. Only four were successful.

They included Paul Moody of International Media Productions, who until last year ran the NPF at Northern Arts; Julie Blackie of Hard Place, whose husband Jonathan is a director of Northern Arts; and Patrick Collerton of YIP Productions, who is himself a member of the NPF committee responsible for dishing out the dosh.

Before the Two Fat Ladies, Nigel Slater and Nigella Lawson, there was the magisterial Elizabeth David, *Evening News, Norwich*

AD NAUSEAM

ASK anyone in adland to name the apotheosis of effective, intelligent, enduring, amusing advertising, and they will cite the *Economist*'s iconographic red and white adverts.

The reason admen love the *Economist* is because it was the first instance in which the industry was given a chance to advertise its favourite subject: itself. When a copywriter named David Abbott (the Abbott of Abbott Mead Vickers) scrawled on the back of a fag packet "I never read the *Economist*" and then beneath it "Management trainee, aged 49" what he was really saying was first, "Aren't adverts clever?" and then "and so, by association, is *The Economist*".

Hence this simple poster is trumpeted as the King Lear of advertising's canon, making it into the V&A's recent *Power of the Poster* exhibition. (As, incidentally, did the "Hello Boys" Wonderbra ad, starring a pair of breasts, which tells you something else about advertising, but anyway.)

What made the *Economist* campaign so brilliant was that it teetered on the cusp between irritatingly smug and yet undeniably smart... just like the yuppie execs it was designed to attract. And any poster that was a tad too recondite got the same laughs from the arrogant suits, who'd never admit they didn't understand them. This left AMV free to churn out hit-and-miss lines with impunity: the advertising account has been there since its inception.

But the most recent crop from the AMV creative department touch new lows. On one, the line is "Make an impression", done like a brass-rubbing: a truly dazzling piece of lateral thinking. Another says "Is it me, or is Quantum Physics a lot easier these days?" which would make sense if this was an advert for *The Physicist*. Yet another reads "Do you ever go blank at the crucial... thingy."

It's symptomatic of a lowering of standards throughout the industry. David Abbott was a copywriter in the genuine sense: he understood the power of words and knew how to use them. Nowadays advertising creatives are invariably from art college, clued-up on the latest computer graphics and leftfield dance music; less so on how to put a sentence together. This illiteracy helps explain why poster advertising in general is going down the pan. The winner of this year's *Campaign* best poster award was an ad for Vogue.com, where the dot of dotcom was, wait for it... a nipple. If tits are replacing words as the lingua franca of marketing, no wonder the *Economist* has nothing left to say.

Pseuds Corner

Kid A [the new Radiohead album] arrives like Mark Antony delivering Caesar's funeral oration: it comes not to praise rock but to bury it.

Time Magazine

Home
You spread our duck
breasts with your trade-mark mix

of honey, soya, Chinese Five
Spice, while I etch
a fingernail down your spine –

ending in a fuck
the length of the kitchen table
making the bread-board rise

to its feet, the dog beneath us whine
and Sainsbury's poultry burn.

RUTH PADEL
Poetry London

John Lamb **If this is Lostalgia?**
2pm-7pm The Bonington Gallery
Live art performance
Components: Solo performer, red/blue gravel, ink, mouthwash, tape, iconography, paper, a bowl, a stone, a watch, forceps, aftershave.
Lamb enters into the empty performance space with a rucksack on his back. An engaging five hour durational piece is unpacked from the rucksack as Lamb utilises objects within it to assemble the event. Lamb

bases the performance around blue and red stained gravel, with which he constructs/deconstructs lines. With no specific narrative and repetitive movement the piece demands real endurance.

Nottingham 'Expo 2000:
A Festival of Emerging Artists'

The Long Island Bi-retro is one of my last designs and is different to all the watches I have ever created. Inspired by my passion for Art Deco, its notion of time, represented by the bi-retro (two-handed) second indication, provokes thought about each passing second and encourages one to recognise the true moments of life.

I am pleased by this watch's amusing side, created by the ballet of the hands on the dial, which remind us that creation is, above all, a playful moment.

FRANCK MULLER
British Airways 'High Life' Magazine

CONTRIBUTORS: Andy Knight, A. Non, Terry Hanstock, Tom Howe.

£10 paid for entries

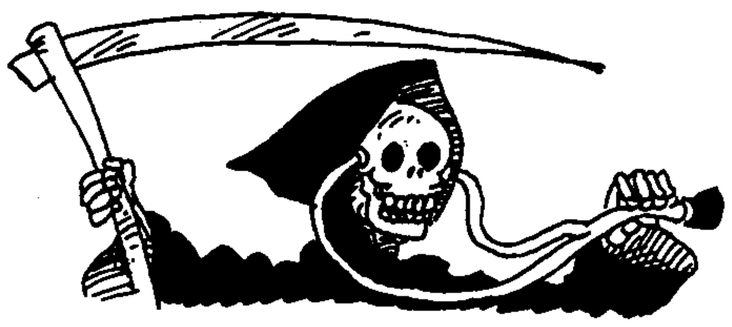
GOING LIVE

ITN's suspiciously regular "special" reports for the 9pm slot (recently abandoned by the BBC) continue their pointless run.

On 1 November Dermot Murnaghan interrupted regular programmes to point out that "another day of heavy rain has pushed up water levels".

Then suddenly it was live to Nick Owen somewhere in the dark. Dermot, touching his ear-piece, had an important question: "Nick, what effect will all that water have on the flooding?"

DOING THE ROUNDS



Letter of the Week

"UNDER the new 'concordat' between Labour and the private health sector, will surgeons have the virtual immunity from action against negligence which they currently enjoy when they operate in private hospitals?" asks reader Mark Timlett, himself a victim of medical negligence.

"My initial concern, when I was such a victim eleven years ago in Kent, was survival not litigation. Enquiries some time afterwards to the local health authority only pointed to a long, expensive and probably fruitless legal battle. GPs and consultants who have treated me for the aftermath have all dropped their professional guard to express surprise that the `surgeon' escaped punishment. Surely New Labour wouldn't risk the health of the nation in this way, would it?"

Mr Timlett's letter would doubtless ring bells with the recently deceased and self-styled "fastest gynaecologist in the south-east", Rodney Ledward. Ledward was holed up in southern Ireland where he'd been given the all clear to work as a pharmacist, despite his appalling record as a surgeon. Kent detectives were on the verge of seeking an extradition on criminal assault charges when Ledward passed on, leaving his NHS victims to seek compensation from East Kent health authority.

Getting compensation out of the NHS is hard enough, but the private sector does not have its own litigation authority and private patients have to seek redress directly from Ledward's medical insurance company, which is even harder.

The adequate regulation of private hospitals is important not just because they tend to lack the round the clock expertise of the NHS (and are therefore not the place to be in an emergency), but because the lack of scrutiny of private medicine tempts doctors into over-stretching themselves. As one anonymous professor put it: "There's this macho belief that any old idiot can whack a hip in, even if he hasn't done one before."

Beverley Webb, a consultant at Pinehill Hospital, Hitchin, in Hertfordshire, is even more scathing about private fiddling. "What does one do if a colleague who is not an orthopaedic surgeon or hand surgeon operates on Dupytren's contractures, or a colleague who is not a plastic surgeon performs breast reductions, or a colleague who is not a gynaecologist inappropriately operates on genital prolapse? What do you do if a colleague always finds something to operate on no matter what the patient is referred with? And what do you say to the anaesthetist who always puts in a regional block as well as giving a general anaesthetic in order to bump up the fee?... All of these examples are observed every week by all of us who have our eyes open. Worse, they are obvious to our nursing and paramedical colleagues, who wonder why we are doing nothing to correct these anomalies..."

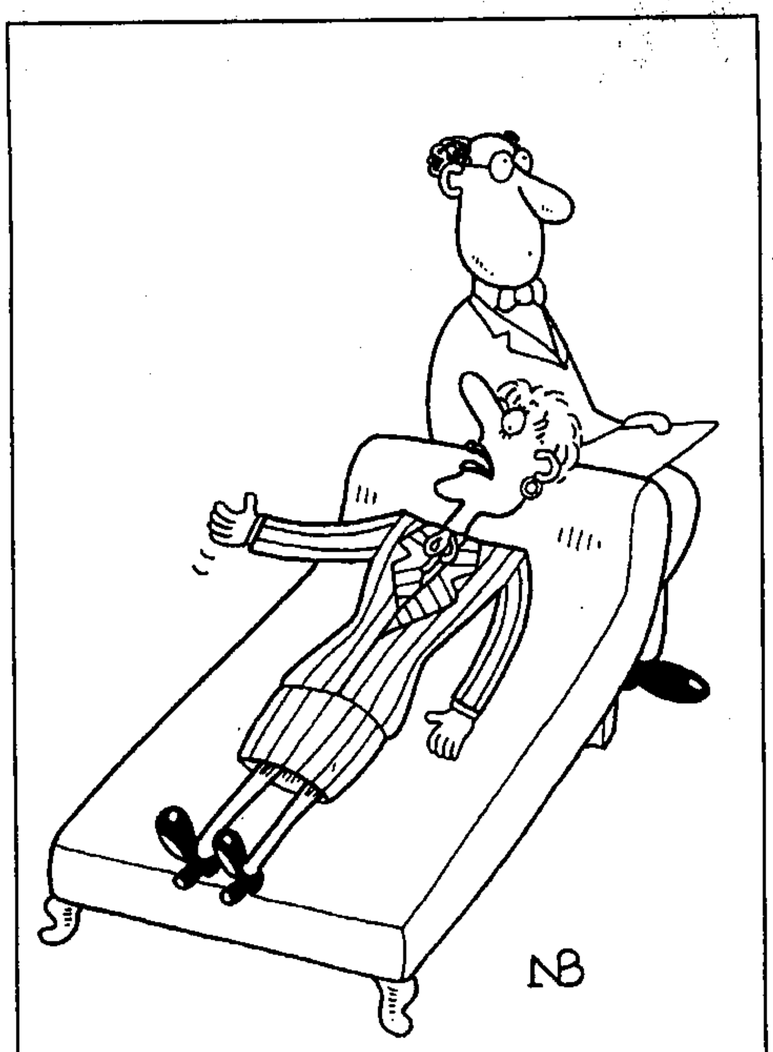
Bringing private medicine into bed with the NHS without addressing these "anomalies" could indeed be a disaster.

How They Are Related?

● SUE PAGE, chief executive of Northumbria Health Care, has just been made a member of the new Modernisation Action Team, the national vehicle designed to drive forward so-called reform in the NHS. Page now publicly advertises herself as a "national moderniser". But taking forward Labour's new agenda of "scrutiny, scrutiny, scrutiny" will inevitably place her own performance in the spotlight. How lucky, then, that inspection of her own Trust will be the responsibility of a new appointee to the Newcastle and North Tyneside Health Authority, one Peter Scott – aka Mr Sue Page.

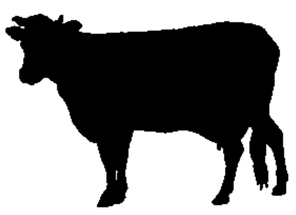
● "THE new director of the new NHS Modernisation Agency – said to be the second most important job in the NHS – has gone to Barbara Stocking, director of the south east regional office. The job was not even advertised, despite Lord Nolan's diktat on public appointments; but as the department of health put it: "This is just a secondment to set up the agency. Permanent arrangements will be set up in due course." So that's all right, then.

M.D.



"I tried religion, but God just didn't understand my needs"

DOWN ON THE FARM



BRITAIN's armed forces get through a mighty pile of meat each year: more than 700 tonnes of lamb and 1,800 tonnes of beef. Not so long ago it was taken for granted the bulk of this should come from British farms. Not any more.

In recent years British farmers have been shocked to learn that most of the meat bought by the ministry of defence (MoD) has been imported: 98 percent of the lamb; well over half the beef; and 75 percent of the chicken, most of this bought from France.

Welsh sheep farmers became so angry they refused to allow the army to use their land. To the army's embarrassment, this led to the cancellation of at least one major military exercise. Then English, Scottish and Welsh farm unions joined in, along with various meat producer organisations. After heated words and prolonged negotiations, the MoD reluctantly agreed to make some of its cheaper purchases from Britain. This year no less than a fifth of the lamb served to our forces will be homegrown. A glorious victory indeed!

What has been interesting about this battle is the extraordinary naiveté of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and other farming organisations as to why the MoD should source most of its meat from abroad, particularly from our "partners" in the European union.

Not least of the reasons the NFU is known as the "No Effing Use" is that it is besotted with the EU. They also seem blissfully unaware that the reason British troops eat so many French chickens and beefburgers is because, being "good Europeans", MoD offficials are punctilious in observing the EU's "procurement rules". These dictate that all public contracts must be advertised in the EU's *Official Journal* and put out to tender across the EU, and that the lowest bid must be accepted.

The French and other continental food producers are wise to this game. Whenever they see a British forces contract advertised, they make sure their bid is lower than the British competition. And in this they are helped by the pitiful weakness of that same euro with which Ben Gill is so infatuated.

Naturally the NFU is reluctant to explain to those angry Welsh sheep farmers that this is the real reason British squaddies have to pig it on French lamb. Nor would it admit that there is no way in a million years that the French defence ministry would allow its own people to eat meat sourced from anywhere but France. *Les procurement directives*, you see, are regarded in Paris as strictly a law to be obeyed by those idiotic *rosbifs*.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

NOOKS and CORNERS

DEMOLITION or mutilation are not the only worst fates an historic building can suffer: it might simply be stolen. Not the walls and roof necessarily, but the interior within.

Over the last eight years, 10 historic and congenial pub interiors in Birmingham have been stolen: counters, bar fittings, etched glass and mirrors, decorative tiles and fireplaces — everything, in fact, that makes a good Victorian or Edwardian pub a pleasant place to be — have been stripped out.

This has usually occurred when the pub has been empty while ownership changed. The result, in nine cases out of 10, has been that the pub has never reopened. Instead it has been converted into offices or demolished.

Of the 10 victims five were listed buildings (grade II): the New Inn at Handsworth (interior stolen 1992); the Church Tavern at Aston (1993); and three pubs in Hockley — the historic Jewellery Quarter — the Duke of York (1996); the Gunmakers Arms (1996); and the George & Dragon (1997).

So where are they now? Probably gracing theme pubs or restaurants in Europe or America. For years the police *did not* take the theft of architectural interiors seriously; Georgian marble chimneypieces could be ripped out of listed buildings almost with impunity. Recently, however, a conservation group within the police has been established and more efforts are being made to get the stuff back. After all, if historic buildings are listed by the government for public benefit, their mutilation through theft is a crime against the community.

However, in the case of the missing Birmingham interiors, although "an individual" was arrested, no charges were brought because he handled the stolen fittings "in good faith". Besides, because the thefts took place when the pubs were changing hands, no owner ever reported the theft of the contents so, officially, they were not stolen. Absurd.

The latest victim is the City Tavern in Bishopsgate Street in the heart of Birmingham, whose fine Victorian interior disappeared two years ago — a day after the pub closed and the tenant left. My illustration comes from a website set up by CAMRA* to publicise these thefts: an admirable idea. In consequence, one of the "snob screens" was traced to an antique dealer in Bristol. Perhaps it will go back to the City Tavern, which is now being made into a restaurant; perhaps not. The sad fact is that a fine pub has been destroyed.

'Piloti'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

UNDER THE GUN

WITH riot police surrounding the town hall, police marksmen on *the roof* and demonstrators at the *gates, how was it that* councillors in Hackney ended up being summoned to an extraordinary council meeting on 6 November to vote for a £22m package of emergency cuts in services?

There had certainly been no shortage of warnings over the previous two years that financial meltdown was imminent in one of Britain's most deprived boroughs. Indeed, the alarm bells should have started ringing in November 1998 when the core finance department failed to produce a single financial report for councillors for four consecutive months.

When one at last surfaced it was based on figures which were months out of date. Individual departments' spending figures were then transferred to the corporate database with a 50 percent error rate, so no one had any idea of the true state of the council's finances. Armed with a set of completely duff figures, councillors blithely set their over-optimistic budget for the year 1999-2000.

In January this year the Local Government Association, concerned that Hackney had lost the plot, sent in the Improvement and Development Agency (IdeA) to investigate its finances. It found the council on the verge of financial collapse and warned that the government could step in and close the whole show down unless Hackney got its act together.

Having ignored all the warnings Hackney, which is run by an unholy alliance of Labour and Conservative councillors, faces the prospect of having to agree further cuts, possibly up to £40m, over the next few months, plus the loss of more than 500 council jobs. Workers and council taxpayers seeking someone to blame for the fiasco will do so in vain. The council has already sought legal advice from Timothy Straker QC about whether any councillors or officers could be surcharged by the district auditor for "identifiable loss incurred or deficiency caused by the wilful misconduct of any person".

Straker has reassured them that problems are not due to any individual but instead to "the general malaise" affecting the finances of the borough as a whole. So that's all right then.

● BACK in June the crown prosecution service (CPS) decided not to prosecute Durham city council chief executive Colin Shearsmith and local businessman Rob Fulton after a six-month investigation by the fraud squad into a controversial land deal between Fulton and the council (*Eyes passim*). Fulton had paid the council £375,000 plus a small plot of land vital to the city's grandiose Millennium City development in exchange for the freeholds of four council-owned shops in Claypath, a former council office and an old car park. The police investigated after it was pointed out that Fulton had apparently paid the council some £500,000 less than the properties were worth. After it ended Fulton said: "I was never involved in anything apart from good business." Quite what a good deal he got is now becoming apparent. He has quietly applied to build five luxury flats on the old car park thrown in to the Millennium City deal — an old car park with stunning views of Durham cathedral. When they go on sale the flats should fetch at least £250,000 apiece.

ASHEN-FACED

RED faces in Newcastle where, between 1994 and 1999, the city council spread 2,000 tonnes of waste ash from its Byker incinerator plant on to allotment paths, bridleways and other public sites across the city. It now turns out the ash was disgustingly toxic, containing more than 800 times the safe level of potentially carcinogenic dioxins, and that it should by law have been buried in landfill sites at the outset.

All this emerged earlier this year when protesters who are campaigning against an expansion of the incinerator sent samples of the ash for analysis. With the environment agency (EA) sniffing around, the city council hurriedly set up an internal public inquiry, supposedly independent of senior cabinet members, to be chaired by backbench Labour councillor Norman "Captain" Povey.

Eyebrows were raised when the council's solicitor Val Dodds was instructed on behalf of the inquiry to "pre-interview" potential witnesses. Cynics argued a better word would be "coach". The EA was perturbed about the inquiry — it didn't want possible future prosecutions prejudiced by evidence given to it — and threatened an injunction if it proceeded.

The council caved in and scrapped the inquiry, which actually hadn't met in three months. Prominent cabinet member Kevan Jones told the local press it was "completely outrageous that an unaccountable quango like the EA can dictate what members of a directly elected council can or cannot do". The agency's threat of legal action was an "absolute disgrace". Jones pledged to urge his council cabinet colleagues to resume the inquiry and said the EA was "the villain" of the piece.

Why should Jones, cabinet member for development, be so agitated? Obviously it cannot have anything to do with the fact that, back in 1994 when the tipping started, the chair of public health and environmental protection, the committee supposed to be running the incinerator, was none other than councillor Kevan Jones.

PLAY DOUGH

ISLINGTON may be Lib Dem these days, but the memory of its loony Labour past lingers on.

Last month the north London council spent £15,000 (plus another £200,000-odd if lost working time is taken into account, say the unions) on sitting staff in front of a preposterous "motivational" play called *A Change of Mind* which "challenged" council workers to "brainstorm... appropriate and inappropriate behaviours" and "discuss the processes... that affect the performance of your team both positively and negatively" etc etc.

Many workers felt the staff newsletter *Councilwide* unintentionally got it spot on when it observed that "many people will be cynical and think that the play is a waste of time, money and a senior management tool for propaganda". Cynical? How could staff be cynical when Islington — flogging off property, closing day centres for the elderly and withdrawing support for voluntary organisations — has just hired Judith Barnes of City law firm Eversheds to be interim head of law at £4,800 a week?

High Principals

SO, farewell then Terry Ashurst. The principal of Doncaster College who will be remembered for many great achievements — not least inspiring this column to expose the greed and arrogance engendered by the incorporation of further education colleges — has announced his retirement in August 2001. His other achievements include:

1 Appointing his mistress Nina Regan as his secretary when he first joined Doncaster in 1991. Before long Nina had been promoted threefold to a) Mrs Ashurst number two; b) head of personnel; and c) clerk to the board of governors.

2 Widescale sackings at the college, most notably that of former sociology teacher and trade union rep John Giddins, who had the audacity to complain to the press that Nina Ashurst's position as clerk to the board of governors was a clear conflict of interest.

The only other channels of complaint available to Giddins were the Further Education Funding Council, which had already proved itself to be firmly on the side of the principal; and, er, the clerk to the board of governors. Nina was forced to resign the post and Giddins won his claim of unfair dismissal.

3 Setting up a £1m conference centre at Doncaster College, run by Waterdale Training Enterprises, of which Terry Ashurst was a director, at the same time as the college was running a £1.3m surplus and lecturing staff had been cut by 10 percent. When the *Eye* wrote about "the Stables" Ashurst launched a furious investigation to find out who had blown the whistle.

At the end of such an illustrious career, Ashurst must have racked his brains for hours to come up with a suitable encore. His recent appointment to Doncaster council's new education and culture board provided just the ticket.

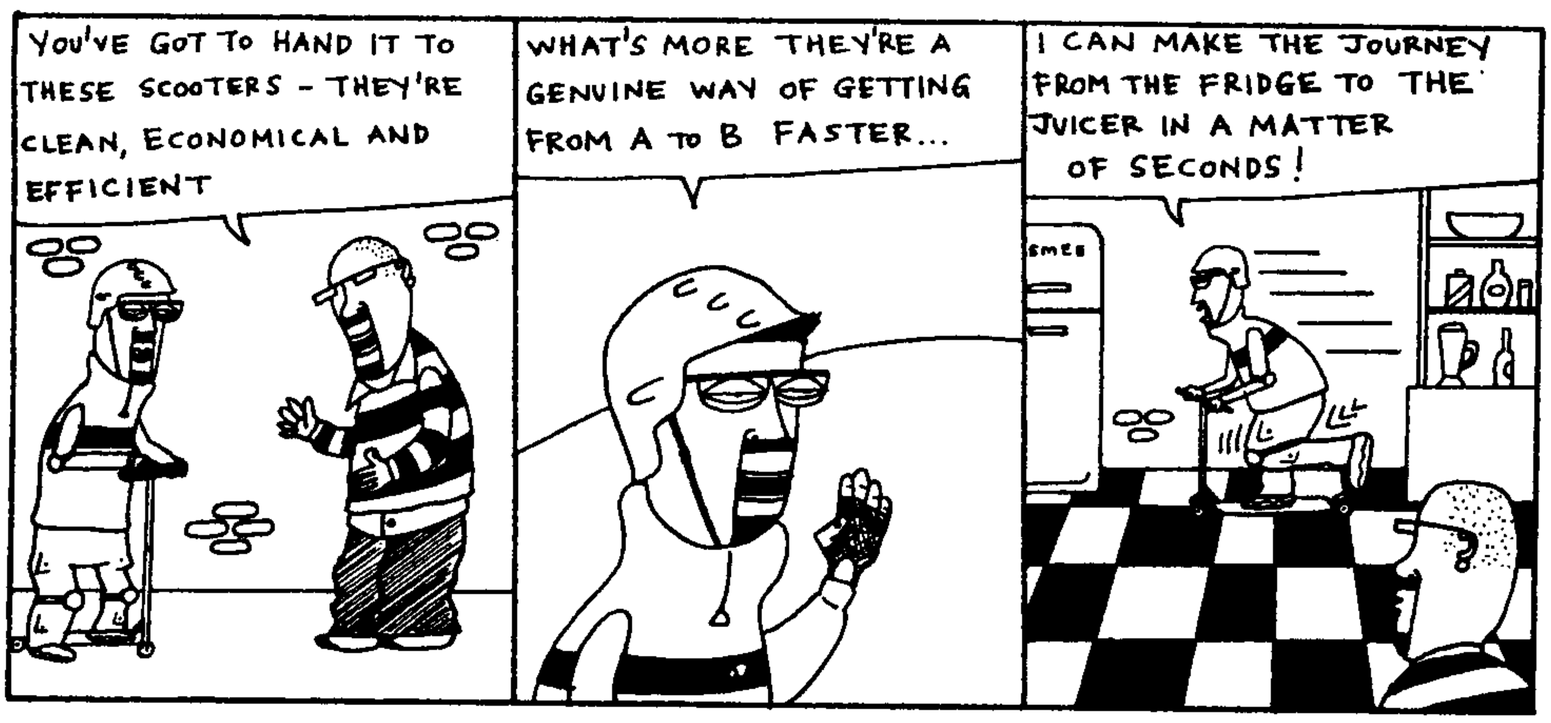
Ashurst is the further and higher education representative on the board which has just produced a consultation paper on the future of post-16 education in Doncaster proposing the closure of several secondary school sixth forms. The plans are deeply unpopular in the town, but Ashurst is unlikely to let that bother him. If the school sixth forms close, Terry's empire at Doncaster College will increase dramatically, leaving him with a magnificent legacy to pass on to his successor. Whoever that may be, one person who is sure to benefit from the expansion of the college is Nina Ashurst, still head of personnel.

RELATIONS between the principal of Wigan and Leigh College, Margaret "Mrs Merton" Murdin, and lecturers' unions have been on a slippery slope ever since it was revealed that the college sent a representative to a union-busting jamboree in May.

The Trade Union Roadshow, organised by law firm Eversheds, starred US employment lawyer Alan Lips who preaches a "honey-and-vinegar approach" to turn employees against unions. Gillian Houghton, who attended the conference on behalf of Wigan and Leigh, was one of only two delegates from educational institutions.

Now it appears Mrs Merton has put the ideas her stooge gleaned at the corporate gala into practice by granting the nationally-agreed 3.3 percent pay rise for all lecturers at the college with a couple of exceptions. These are the one remaining lecturer on the old silver-book contract and 32 other academic staff who refused to sign a second wave of new "flexible" contracts. Needless to say these contracts were imposed and not negotiated with the unions.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


YOU'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO THESE SCOOTERS - THEY'RE CLEAN, ECONOMICAL AND EFFICIENT
WHAT'S MORE THEY'RE A GENUINE WAY OF GETTING FROM A TO B FASTER...
I CAN MAKE THE JOURNEY FROM THE FRIDGE TO THE JUICER IN A MATTER OF SECONDS!
SMEG

Letters

Anil fixation

Sir,

I write concerning your story on the DTI's Mirror inquiry in the latest issue, and for that matter, the various others you have written on the Slickers affair.

To the best of my knowledge, everything you've written about me so far is bollocks.

Best wishes,
ANIL BHOYRUL,

London NW3.

Needled

Sir,

It is easy to understand Steve Law's distress over his child's autism but I'm afraid he is well wide of the mark when he blames MMR vaccine for the rise in this condition. Sorry, folks, but there is no conspiracy here and MMR vaccine does not cause autism.

The original report in the "Lancet", on which this nonsensical view is based, should never have been published. The real tragedy of the MMR story is that a hysterical press has persuaded so many people not to take their children for MMR vaccination and has cast a shadow over the whole issue of immunisation in general.

ROGER A. FISKEN,

Bedale, N. Yorks.

Minding our ps and bs

Sir,

About the Hindujas reference in your magazine – we particularly liked "Gobichand" Hinduja (was Gobi = cauliflower a deliberate substitution for Gopichand?) Chand = Moon by the way.

PREMENDRA SINGH,

New Delhi, India.

A good Baraking

Sir,

I enjoyed your quotation from the recently unearthed "Book of Barak" — but am obliged to point out that an important fragment appears to be missing from your copy. The passage rightly states that the Temple Mount is holy to Moslems (although it is only their third holiest site), but the manuscript neglects to mention that the Mount is Judaism's foremost (indeed its only) holy place.

Unfortunately the text exhibits another significant corruption. Mr Sharon is rebuked for walking around the area "as if he owneth it"... the Temple Mount is never even REFERRED to in the Koran, whereas the Bible regularly states that it, er, does indeed belong to Mr Sharon and his nation. (Remarkably this is also the current geopolitical state of affairs — as prophesied in Zechariah 8:7-8.)

Yours exegetically,
EVAN "NOT A JEW" SMITH,

Portsmouth.

Late Lunch

Sir,

I hate to correct you but on page 9 (1014) you state that Brillo Pad's lunch for the Barclay Foundation was held at "Edinburgh's One Devonshire restaurant". Er, unfortunately you're 50 miles out — One Devonshire is in Glasgow.

In the same article you mention Rebecca Hardy's lunchtime meeting with "The Royal Bank's Sir Peter Burt". Er, Sir Peter Burt is NOT a "Royal Banker" (a local colloquialism for those at The Royal Bank of Scotland, who have the questionable honour of maintaining the Tory party overdraft) — he's the top man at the Bank of Scotland, a completely separate banking institution.

Yours,
LENNY LOVE,

Edinburgh, Scotland.

Lookalike

Jack

Liz

Sir,

Have any of your readers noticed the amazing resemblance of Liz Dawn (ubiquitous "Corrie" actress) to Jack Nicholson as the "Joker" in "Batman"?

Maybe they are related. I think we should be told.

Yours faithfully,
E. MOORE (MRS),

Formby, Merseyside.

Farr sighted

Sir,

Backing your own slogan — "European good, British bad" — you quote French Railways' "operating surplus of about £30m last year", conveniently forgetting that this omits the vast subsidies received by SNCF at central and local government level. SNCF also suffers from the largest number of strikes of any French company, up by 43 percent in 1999.

You seem to forget that mainland Europe has had its share of rail mishaps in recent years, with serious accidents in Belgium, Norway (near Roros) and in Germany. At Eschede, more than 100 people perished — two-and-a-half times as many as at Southall, Ladbroke Grove and Hatfield put together.

One aspect of the Hatfield accident has received scant attention in the media. A train was derailed at 115 mph, yet some 97 percent of its passengers survived. This is a tribute to the strength of the MkIV rolling stock inherited from BR InterCity.

Yours,
KEITH FARR,

Cholsey, Oxon.

Spanish practices

Sir,

Your reporter's knowledge of overseas railways is good in parts ("Wreaths on the line II", Eye 1014.)

"Single manning" of high speed trains is routine throughout most of Europe, whether or not trains and infrastructure are fitted with automatic train protection - which is far less widely installed than your reporter believes.

The rule that underpinned the Spanish practice of having two drivers in any train travelling at 110 mph or more was abandoned in Britain for safety reasons. Double manned trains actually passed commensurately more signals at danger than trains without the distraction of a second person in the cab.

Your reporter's remarks about Japan's railways are more accurate. The quality of performance in Japan is very impressive. That is why we are considering what lessons there are for us in Britain and whether we should accept the very high costs associated with them.

Yours faithfully,
IAN MACKELLAR,

Public Affairs Manager, Association of Train Operating Companies.

Games on!

Sir,

Re: 2002 Commonwealth Games. Contrary to the item in Rotten Boroughs ("Running Sore", Nov 3), Manchester's plans are well on track. The running costs of the Games are £62m, an amount to be raised through ticket sales and merchandising, as well as overseas TV rights and sponsorship. One third of the sponsorship target has been achieved and talks with further sponsors and overseas TV companies are well advanced.

The new City of Manchester Stadium, together with new facilities for squash, tennis and athletics are being built in East Manchester as part of a major regeneration programme for the area. All new venues are paid for and each one has an agreed and fully funded after use.

Security during Games time – 25 July to 4 August 2002 — has been carefully budgeted and discussions with the Home Office continue because security for a national event is not just Manchester's responsibility. And the £10.5m funding from Government for the opening and closing ceremonies was given in recognition that the games will inspire and involve the whole nation; showcase Britain and Manchester to the world and be a cornerstone of the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Yours sincerely,
GARY BEST,

Marketing and Communications Manager, Manchester 2002 Ltd.

Sir,

Whoever wrote the article entitled "Running Sore" excelled themselves. Where on earth did he or she get the information used in the article from? It could certainly have been better researched.

One sentence states that "The games are taking place in one of the most lawless, gun-infested areas of Britain, with the stadium and sports village built in 'bandit country' two miles from civilisation." How can you write such drivel? The area is certainly not a leafy suburb, but neither is it "bandit country". Luckily we do not suffer as some areas of the country (including areas of London) do from gun-wielding thugs roaming the streets.

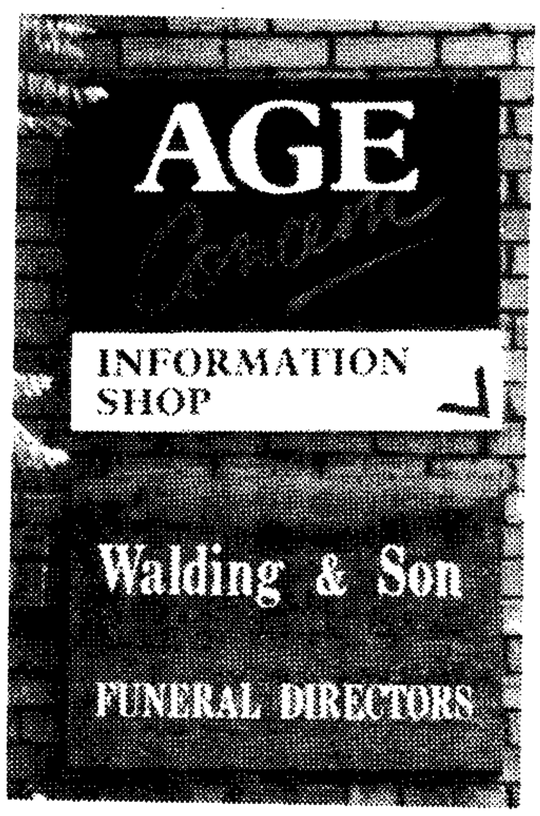
Yes, we live in a poor area of the country which has suffered more than most from the decline in industry. We have a high level of unemployment following the closure of so many factories during the 70s and 80s, but surely this is a good reason for holding the games here. It has given the people of Beswick, Clayton and Bradford hope for the future. Residents here are doing their best under difficult circumstances, and with the help and support of several different agencies, to make the area a better place to live, work and bring up their families.

Most people who live in this area struggle for survival (economically, and not because of gun-infestation) on a daily basis, and are hopeful that things will change for the better with the arrival of the Commonwealth Games.

Yours faithfully,
MRS JENNIFER HESFORD,

Trindon Close Residents Association, Manchester.

SUPERMODELS
KERBER
I'M HERE IN CHINA, WHERE THE CATWALK INDUSTRY IS STARTING TO TAKE OFF!
CHINA MODELS
CHINA HAS ALWAYS HAD A REPUTATION FOR BEING A SUPPRESSED NATION WHERE PEOPLE AREN'T ENCOURAGED TO THINK!
I KNOW— ISN'T IT PERFECT?!!!



I-SPY

Uxbridge, Middlesex

Submitted by Alec Moore.

£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

"Hang on... I'm receiving a text message"

Not so sweet

Sir,

Even Newer Muckspreader (Eye 1014) berates the European Commission for planning to open up the sugar market to more cane sugar "largely produced by sweated labour". Well, in the tropics labourers do sweat a bit — it's the heat you know. The real scandal is that it's taken so long to open the market just this far. Sugar beet farming is only viable at all because the European sugar market has been massively rigged for years against efficient cane producers in the developing world. Shut off from European markets by blatant protectionism, former sugar-producing economies have been forced to turn to tourism, money laundering and drug running. Sugar beet farming requires huge chemical and energy inputs, produces massive soil erosion, particularly at harvest time and even more so when the fields are wet. For most of the year, sugar beet fields lie brown and barren. There is no organic beet production. The only justification for local sugar production — to satisfy the nation's sweet tooth during a naval blockade — has long since ceased to have any relevance.

EDWARD BARROW,

Brixton, London.

Dire consequences

Sir,

Monsieur Gerbil's contribution to the Parish News magazine may be written in cod French, but he would conjugate dire correctly and write vous dites and not vous disez (Eye 1014). If not, perhaps St Albion's schoolmaster, Mr Blunkett, should be told as this is clear evidence of falling standards of literacy.

Yours faithfully,
ERIC BROWN,

Croydon, Surrey.

Powys to the people

Sir,

Bookworm seems to imply that Hay-on-Wye is in Gloucestershire. Despite the fact that we have a Hereford postcode (also not in Gloucestershire), the town is in fact in Powys, in Wales.

If I had a subscription I might be tempted not to renew it.

Yours faithfully,
PETE DEWELL,

Hay-on-Wye.

Dumb question

Sir,

Call me stupid but I am confused as to why "Apart from washing, name something you might find on a washing line? Answer: A tent" should have featured in your "Dumb Britain" column (Eye 1014). If anyone knows a better way to dry out a wet tent after use, I'd be delighted to hear it.

Yours,
STEVE ELLIS,

Via e-mail.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

John Champion: *The question everyone is asking is why you didn't win by a greater margin.*

Arsene Wenger: *It was because we didn't get a second goal.*

BBC1
(Roy Smith)

"He [Anderlecht striker] hits it into the corner of the net as straight as a nut!"
DAVID PLEAT, ITV
(John Bellingham)

"My parents have been there for me, ever since I was about 7..."
DAVID BECKHAM, BBC1
(Claire Alsop)

"But he was a player that hasn't had to use his legs even when he was nineteen years of age because his first two yards were in his head."
GLENN HODDLE, BBC
(Michael N. Rushton)

"She [J.K. Rowling] has sold forty million copies in as many countries."
SUE LAWLEY, Radio 4
(Nick Pegg)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

Letter from Istanbul
from Our Own Correspondent

"DESTINED Glory" is the kind of ringing clarion call that can move men to storm up beaches in far-flung corners of the globe. Yet with the dust settling on Nato's annual north Aegean wargames, "Destined Glory" now seems more redolent of low brow farce.

Promoted as a great example of Greek-Turkish rapprochement, the annual manoeuvres were to see Greek troops landing on Turkish soil, Greek aircraft touching down at Turkish air bases and Greek ships joining Turkish frigates for a week of charging around the north Aegean blowing up bits of Turkish territory. This would have been unheard of a year and a half ago and seemed to represent a concrete example of the new friendship.

Yet things did not go as planned. No sooner had the flowers, bottles of raki and ouzo been exchanged by smiling Greek and Turkish commanders than the US commander of the exercise, Lt Gen Ronald Keys, departed, to be replaced by a Turkish general. It was not long before the exercises, designed to test Greek-Turkish cooperation, had disintegrated into a series of ever-more realistic confrontations between Greek and Turkish forces.

First off two Greek Corsair jets were buzzed by Turkish F-16s. The jets had been flying over the Greek island of Limnos on their way to participating in the wargames. The islands of Limnos and Ikaria are, however, the subject of heavy dispute between Athens and Ankara; Turkey maintains they should be demilitarised – and thus outside the scope of the wargame – while Greece maintains it is perfectly within its rights to arm these rocklets to the teeth.

The Turkish general staff issued a warning that there would be "undesirable repercussions" if Greek fighters "continue to violate the principles of Nato" by flying over Greek islands. This appalling violation of Greek airspace by the Greeks could not go unpunished.

But while the Greeks were accused of breaking Nato regulations by being in Greece, back with the land exercises Greek violations of Turkish territory were being actively encouraged. "This [rapprochement] is definitely a step in the right direction," an unnamed Greek marine commander told Turkish NTV television, his troops whacking round after round into an abandoned village after storming ashore in northern Turkey. The object of the land exercise was, after all, for the Greeks to practise liberating Anatolian soil from a "foreign invader", something that some Greeks insist they have been trying to do ever since the fall of Constantinople.

Back out over the Aegean things were less rosy. A flight of Greek aircraft was again spotted by eagle-eyed Turkish pilots as it tried to tear straight across another Greek island. Scrambling only just in time, the F-16s managed to head off this "clear and present danger" by buzzing the Greek planes and engaging in a mock dogfight.

The Turkish general staff issued a warning that it viewed the Greek planes as "hostile" and that in future all its fighters would be armed with live ammunition. So, a highly realistic turn for the war-games – though perhaps not one Nato planners had envisaged.

Nor had they probably envisaged that "Destined Glory" was about to become enmeshed further south with the "Nikiforos" Greek Cypriot military exercises. Late last month news came that Turkish jets had tried to force back a flight of Greek jets heading for the island to participate in the Cypriot wargames. Another realistic scenario then, in which Greek Nato aircraft attempted to support Greek Cypriot aircraft resisting Turkish Nato aircraft attacking Greek Cyprus, while Turkish Nato aircraft tried to prevent Greek Nato aircraft from intervening in a Greek Cypriot attempt against Nato member Turkey.

The semi-official Athens News Agency reported that Turkish fighter planes had violated Greek and Greek Cypriot airspace 12 times but had finally been chased off by 26 Greek fighters after a total of six "intense" mock dogfights. At this point the Greeks decided to take their toys and go home.

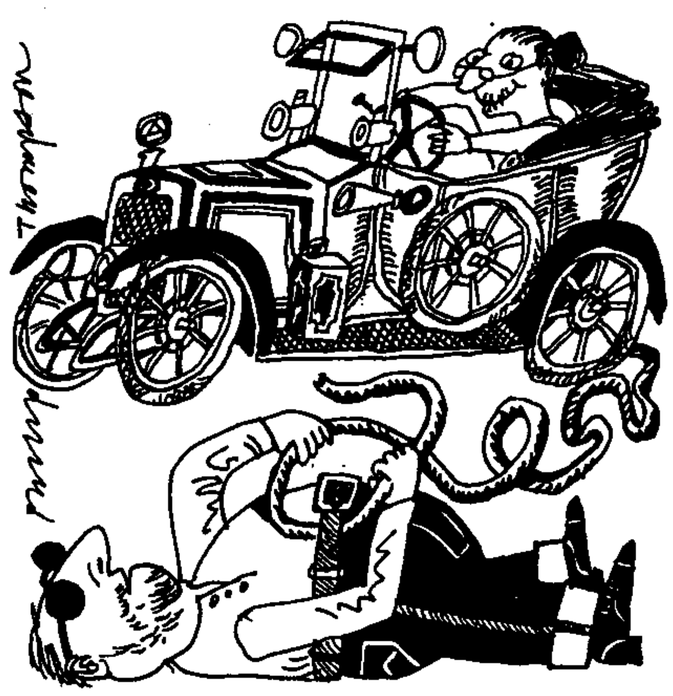
Summing up the whole exercise Turkish foreign minister Ismail Cem, one of the main architects of the rapprochement, remarked that "ups and downs are possible in Greek-Turkish relations", but that he hoped these would not lead "to any confrontation".

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

● "Franklin was a really good guy, and I'm going to miss him," eighty-seven-year-old Leta Gray told reporters at her farmhouse in Shawnee, Oklahoma. "He was ninety-four and blind, but he was a proud man. Very proud. That was his downfall, I think."

Mrs Grey then gave details of the fatal accident which had occurred the previous day. "Even though he was blind, he'd still



walk just a little ways every day, to strengthen his legs. It was awful hot yesterday, but he went out anyway, and a few minutes later I heard him yelling. He'd fallen over in the driveway, and couldn't get up. He was far too heavy for me to lift, but he didn't want me to call the neighbours for help, so he came up with a plan. He asked me to tie a rope to the bumper of our car, then slowly reverse the car toward him, so he could tie the other end to his belt buckle. Then he reckoned I could drive forward, and pull him upright.

"I've never driven before, but I didn't want to upset him, so I did what he said. But my foot must have been on the gas pedal instead of the brake, and when I put it into reverse, the car shot back at high speed, ran over him, and crashed into the wall. I called the police but it was too late. He must have died instantly, and the car is a write-off too. Still, we had a good marriage." *(New York Post, 26/8/00. Spotter: Richard Lay)*

● **"Practising Chi Kung certainly helps enhance men's sexual ability," Master Tu Chin-sheng told spectators in a Taipei athletics stadium, "but that is not our major concern. What we want is to help people get into good shape by strengthening the man's sexual organ, which is the source of all life."**

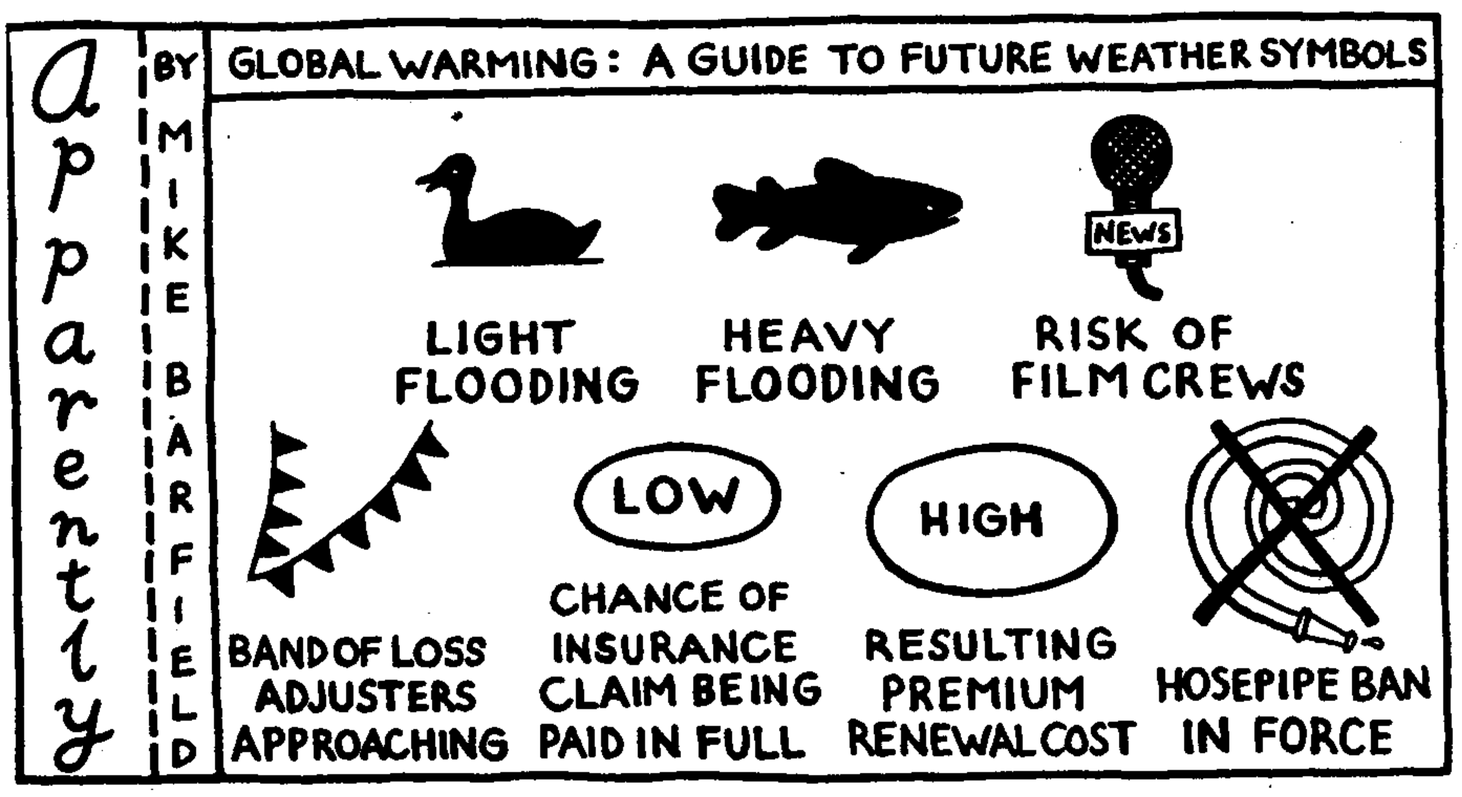
Tu Chin-sheng was speaking immediately after he and a colleague had established a new world record, by completing a lap of the athletics track while towing an eleven-tonne truck with ropes attached to their penises. "Since I opened my martial arts centre twenty-five years ago, thousands of apprentices have benefitted from the practice of what I call '69 Shen Kung' or 'Miracle Feat'. This involves attaching a small weight to the penis and lifting it off the floor, then gradually increasing the load week by week, until you reach 200kgs. Today's performance was just a trial for our more ambitious plan, which is to tow a Boeing 707 along the runway at Taipei airport. That is our dream. However, I must warn against practising Chi Kung without the guidance of a qualified master. That way lies disaster." *(Bangkok Post, 23/10/00. Spotter: Tony Endfield)*

—●—

● *"Have you been flattered lately?" Yuzo Koyama called out to the crowds passing by his House of Flattery in Tokyo's Shibuya neighbourhood. "Then come inside and indulge in a pick-me-up minute with one of our Chief Flattery Officers, and learn to feel good about your hidden charms."*

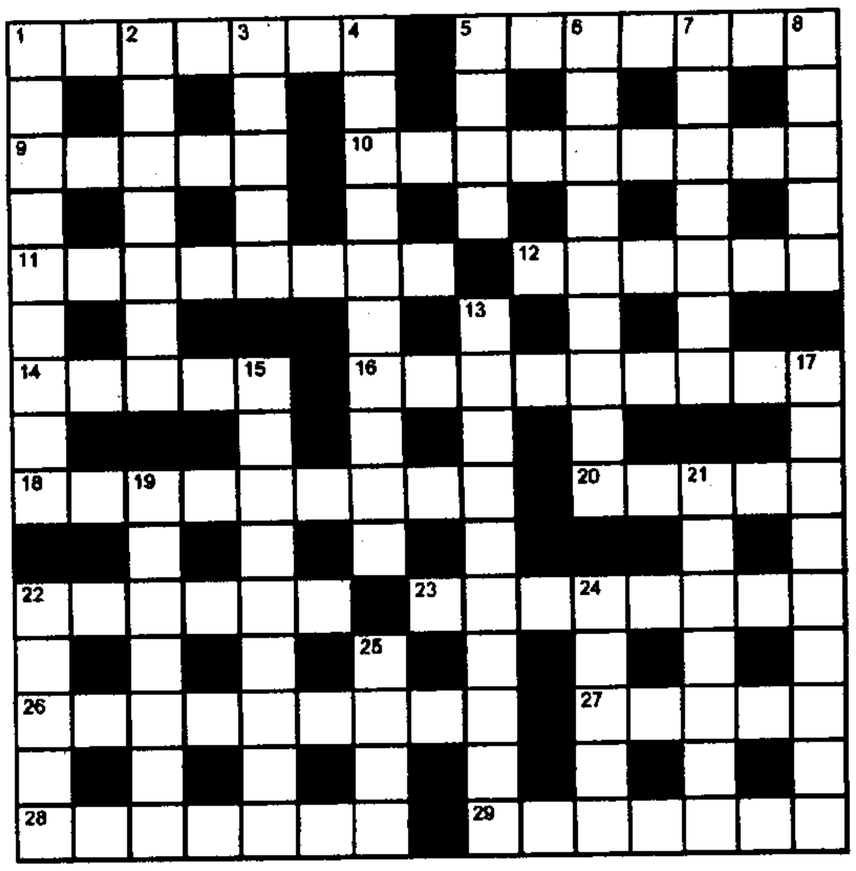
Koyama then explained that, in the year since he and his partner Keiya Mizuno founded their House of Flattery in Meiji Dori Street, business has boomed. "The Japanese are more sparing in their praise than people in most other cultures, and they rarely compliment each other, no matter how good they look. So we thought we'd start offering lavish praise, at 100 yen a minute. People are worried about job cutbacks, rising crime, weak political leadership, and a loss of national confidence, so they're happy to pay us, just to be told that they are highly intelligent and look like film stars."

Customers agreed. "Obviously you're paying for the compliments, but it still feels nice" said Hayashi, who had just handed over 500 yen for a full five-minute flattery session. "With all of Japan's problems right now, maybe these guys can help brighten the atmosphere and improve the mood a bit." (The Japan Times, 3/9/00. Spotter: Neil McGinty)



EYE CROSSWORD 170

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Strapping Roger is what started it all (3,4)
5 Hat fit? Not pissed then! (7)
9 Lots of topless fantasies (5)
10 Lobby for underwear with single blue variation (9)
11/12 A kiss aroused her bedroom activity lover, Blair, on leaving (8,6)
14 Reserve is said to calm an excited member (5)
16 I'm shafted, screwed – awkward that (3-6)
18 Latin girl squeezing Latin boy's pot (9)
20 Hooligan goes topless, showing boner (5)
22 To boot a slapper inside in the West Indies (6)
23 'Names' surprisingly need interest on bill, not a retainer (8)
26 Topping old lady's diametric alternative (9)
27 Anger surrounds Blair's opening – likely to get bashed by evangelist? (5)
28 One taken in by Engel's new republic (7)
29 Be sick though not downcast (5,2)

DOWN

1 Omitting Brown's last outburst, do some quick electioneering (9)
2 Lead on energy chief hoarding top grade (2,5)
3 Pass oneself off as a rising, fabulous storyteller (5)
4 Sex act producing generous climax? (6,4)
5 Chuck's group of luvvies (4)
6 Brief Bell on energy for when there's a large audience (5,4)
7 Spray Queen? Extremely unwise during fight (7)
8 One leaves forced evacuation to last of Tory opposition (5)
13 It should ensure a stiff one doesn't go to waste (10)
15 Altering Brenda's flipping prancing (9)
17 Greatly discounted the gossip — so tawdry! (4,5)
19 Short spell in desolation makes stress an embarrassing fact (3,2,2)
21 Brian's making love with trout! (7)
22 Dirty Digger's organ represented by 'x' (5)
24 Dick, topless, is a hot piece! (5)
25 Be half lovey-dovey with Clinton? (4)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 24.11.00. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.

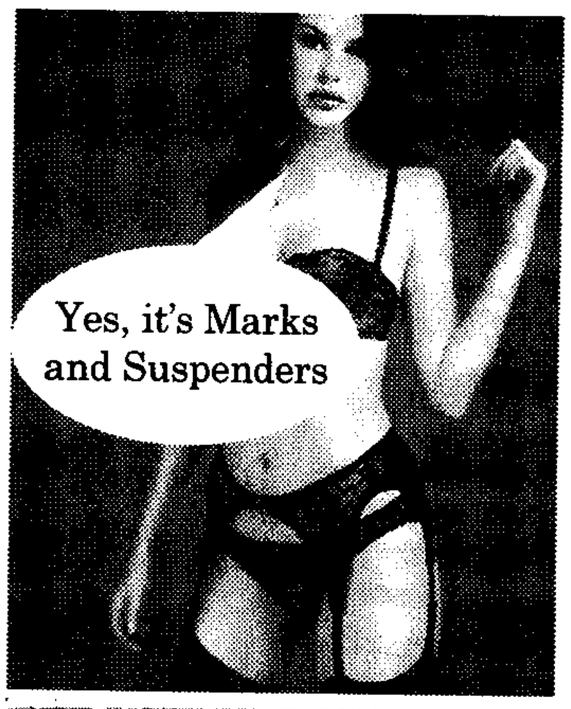
Solution to Crossword No. 169

Winner: RACHEL BOURNE

ACROSS: 1 Caper 4 Damp squib 9 Pussyfoot 10 AWACS 11 Tinkle 12 Wet dream 15 Nappy rash 16 Le Pen 17 Blunt 19 Carbuncle 22 Ethelred 23 Disown 25 Asset 27 Joan of Arc 28 Sex symbol 29 Mates.

DOWN: 1 Capstan 2 Posing pouch 3 Royalty 4 Drop 5 Matterhorn 6 Scandal 7 UDA 8 Best man 13 Expectorant 14 Hatchet job 17 Bye-laws 18 Tolstoy 20 Uniform 21 Eunuchs 24 Dail 26 Sex.

NEW-LOOK M&S



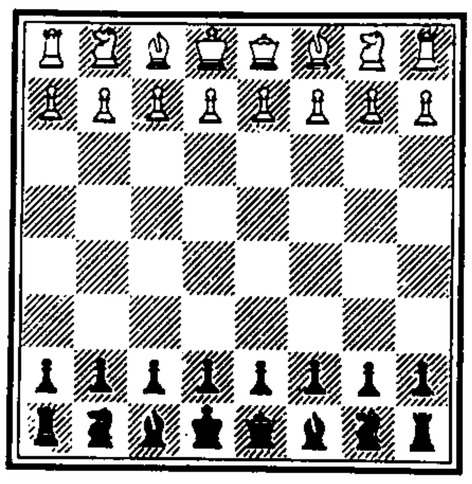
Available at all good S&M Shops

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Chess Puzzle

It is Conrad Black's move. Should he sacrifice his editor in order to stop him filling up the entire newspaper with chess pieces?

Answers to D. Lawson, c/o Canary Wharf.



The Guardian's Top Foreign Affairs Analyst **Jemima Fox** (née Puddleduck) writes:

WHY has everyone got it in for foxes? Why do foxes get such a raw deal in the media? Is it because the Duck lobby is so strong in Washington and rich Ducks own all the TV stations? The level of Foxophobia is reaching ridiculous extremes as the current Duck/Fox conflict escalates out of control due to a worldwide conspiracy of Duckists who are trying to portray foxes as murderous predators who *(cont. p. 94)*

© *Jemima Goldfish*

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Eric Morley, Former Chairman of Mecca Dancing

So. Farewell
Then
Eric Morley.

You were
Famous for
Reading the results
Of the Miss World
Contest in
Reverse order.

Then. Farewell
So.

E.J. Thribb, 36, 28, 17½
– interests include travel and working with children. When in London he would like to meet top poet Michael Horovitz
(Surely "Pam Ayres"?)

NORTH CIRCULAR

14 November: The state visit of the People's Fuel Lobby took place in London today. A procession was formed as follows:

1st Lorry
Mr David "Dave" Yorkie and his son, Dave "Little Dave" Yorkie Junior.

1st Tractor
Farmer Giles Witherington-Spoon and his collie dog, Barker.

1st Long Vehicle
Mr Eddie Lager and his partner Mollie Sarnie.

Also in 1st Long Vehicle
60 illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

1st Television Van
The BBC Points South West Traffic Update Team presenters Tricia Spangle and Mike Cone.

(That's enough procession. Ed.)

"I am not going to be bullied by the protestors into making concessions."

"I am going to do it voluntarily!"

THAT CONFUSING FLORIDA BALLOT PAPER IN FULL

(DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICAN PARTY) **GEORGE W. GUSH**	●	(REPUBLICAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY) **AL BORE**
(INDEPENDENT THIRD PARTY) **RALPH NADIR**	●	(NON-INDEPENDENT PRO-MURDOCH PARTY) **PAT BUCASSHOLE**
(AMERICAN SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY) **DAVE SPARTMAN**	●	(MONSTER HAMBURGER RAVING PARTY) **SCREAMING LORD SUTCHBURGER III**

INSTRUCTIONS

Punch one hole only – i.e. that belonging to brother of Jebenezer Gush, Governor of the State of Florida (no relation).

WHY WE NEED MORE SEX SHOPS — Whittam-Smith Speaks Out

by Our Pornography Staff **Rowan Appealing**

"BRITAIN must lead the way in the pornography industry," said Chief Film Censor, Sir Andreas Whippam-Stiff.

"There must be a pornographic bookshop in every town and village," said the former editor-in-chief of the Independent newspaper, Mr Whippam-Smut (slogan: "It is useless. Are you?").

"If you do not make pornography freely available then our foreign competitors will steal our business," said Sir Undress *(cont. p. 69)*

That Buckingham University Honorary Degree Citation In Full

SALUTAMUS DENISUM THATCHERENSIS, CONSORTUM FIDELUS PER MULTOS ANNOS MARGARETUM THATCHI (DUX SUPREMUS UNIVERSUS ET IMPERATRIX BRITTANIUM ET VICTOR FALKLANDI APPELLATU "FEMINA FERRUS" ET CETERA ET CETERA). BIBULUS MAXIMUM MULTOS SNORTOS TINCTUROSQUE GINUM ET TONICUS FAVORITUM PATER GEMINI MARCUS TWITTUS ET CAROLI SWEETICUS ET AMICUS SCRIBULI TELEGRAPHICO W.F. DEEDUSH (NOTABILE "SHURUS SHUMUS ERRATUM EST?"). MILLIONARUS ET POLITICUS EXTREMUS DEXTER VIZ HANGUM FLOGGUM ET STRINGUM UPQUE. HONORAMUS TE DENIS DOCTORE ARS PISSICUS!

© Buckingham University (formerly Ratners, Milton Keynes)

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And a very wet hullo it is too!

As I write the rain is still pouring down outside the vicarage window, as it has done every day for the past four weeks, and pretty well the whole parish is under water.

Even as I write, I can see Mr Prescott speeding past in one of his two powerboats, on his way to offer his sympathy to those who have had to retreat to the first floor of their homes thanks to the River Alb rising a record 27 metres (or do I mean 8 old feet?) in the past 24 hours.

I know it has not been easy for a lot of you, especially those of you living in the more low-lying parts of the parish, such as Flood Street, Burstbank Avenue and Sandbag Villas.

But, you know, the whole point of these sorts of disasters is to make us focus on the big questions.

Is this an Act of God? Or is it something we could have avoided? If the lorry drivers had used less fuel, then perhaps the climate wouldn't have changed, one could argue.

Or perhaps we should look on the floods as a blessing in disguise; in that when the streets are full of water, we can't use our cars?

Because, you know, these changes in the climate are a terrible warning of what may happen if we interfere in the environment too often.

As our distinguished benefactor Prince Charles said last week in his talk to the St Albion's Green Society (what a pity so few of you could make it – I expect it was the floods), "you know, this whole sort of ozone layer, global organic thingie, is terribly worrying."

I am sure we could all benefit from thinking about what he said, particularly the lorry drivers who have been causing the obstruction outside Tesco's in the High Street, and swigging lager out of their Sun newspapers! Hey, no offence to the trucking community! But as Mr Prescott said, "Why don't they truck off?"

This seemed to make everyone laugh during the coffee after Sunday's evensong, and I must say Mr Prescott has been in his element lately (ie, water!), wading into everything with both feet, and finding himself up to his neck in the brown stuff (and I don't mean Gordon!)!

But let's not get too carried away by all this talk about global warming.

I mean, we have to accept that in the modern world everyone needs a car to get from A to B.

I mean, you can't rely on public transport these days (no offence, Mr Corbett!). Look, we've got to drive, which is why God has given us cars.

And, yes, we must do everything we can to protect our planet for the sake of our

children and our grandchildren (not that I've got any, at least not that I know of!).

But it's only sensible to cut the price of petrol for the most vulnerable members of our community, such as pensioners, nurses and the owners of large haulage companies.

As it says in the Good Book, "for everything there is a season. A time to raise taxes, and a time to lower them" (*Book of Prudence, Ch. 14, v. 1*).

Yours still afloat!

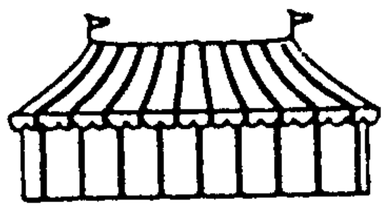
Tony

Verses By A Local Poet

Water, water everywhere,
Just as the poet wrote,
But don't lose heart just yet,
dear friends,
Here's Tony in his boat!
We may have lost our furniture,
Our lounge may smell just vile,
But now the vicar's here,
dear friends,
To warm us with his smile!

M. Barg, runner-up in the St Albion's Senior Citizen Poetry Prize

Millennium Tent Update



P-Y Gerbil writes:

Zut alors! Quel jour amazing! Non, mais vraiement! C'est juste comme une filme de James Bond, ou Topkapi avec Melina Mercouri – ooh-la-la, une amazing dame! Non, mais serieusement, trois cheers pour les hommes en bleu qui préventés le plus grand jewel heist en l'histoire de St Albion's! Un gang de thieves a planné de voler exhibit numéro un dans le Millennium Tent – Un Pair de Cufflinks en Imitation Diamond d'un grand value de £2.99 (kindly loaned par notre ami M. Ratner du magasin Crap 'R' Us dans le High Street). Mais heureusement, le theft etait un complete cock-up, juste like le tent!!

P-Y. J.

PS. Grande Conteste de Beauty on Samedi! Beaucoup de femmes voluptueuses dans leurs swimming costumes! Le Juge: Monsieur Chris Woodhead. Ne missez pas!

Begging In The Parish – A Message From The Vicar

Some of you may recently have noticed a rather sad, scruffily-dressed lady. Known as "Ow Mo", who stands in the High Street, talking to herself, and asking passengers-by for "some spare change". It is very important not to give her any because, whatever she pretends, she will only spend it on buying drink or cannabis. That is why it is particularly important this Christmas not to give money to people like Mo, for their own good. Leave it to the professional carers to deal with this problem. T.B.

Just say Mo!

Parish Notices

The Vicar's talk on the Importance of the Family has been cancelled and he will be replaced by Mrs Jay (Rev. Callaghan's daughter) who will talk on the Importance of Breaking Up Families instead. A.C.

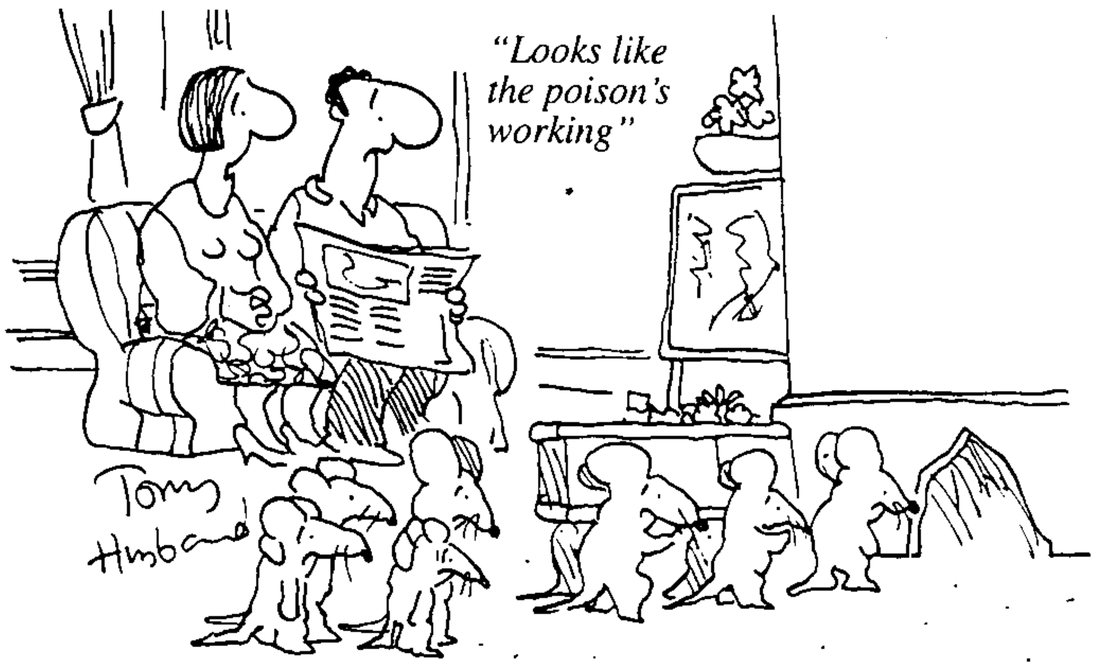
Neighbourhood Watch with P.C. Straw

We have a growing problem in the parish with lorry drivers. We must all join together in cracking down on these trouble-makers before this problem gets out of hand. If you know of any lorry drivers, phone me in complete confidence telling me where they live, and their phone numbers. We must nip this menace in the bud before the toddlers and old folk of St Albion's are deprived of vital food and medical supplies.

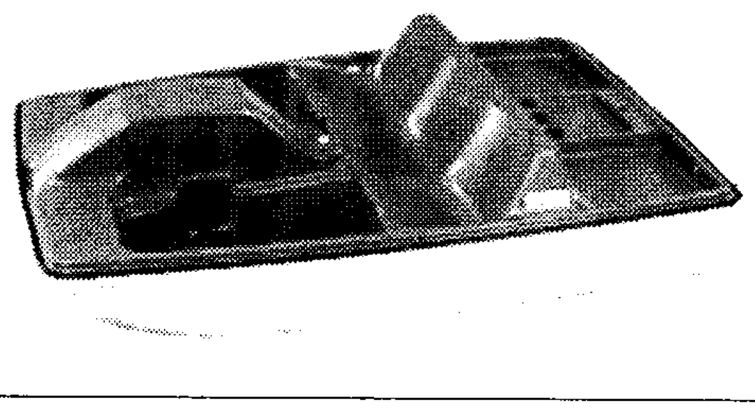
J. Straw
Neighbourhood Watch Co-Ordinator

On sale now – SON OF BLAIR – THE SEQUEL £4.99

DOME DAYLIGHT ROBBERY SUSPECTS — FIRST PICTURES



101 Things You Can Mistake For A Paedophile



No. 6. A Paedo-lo

That New 'Telegraph-Style' BBC2 Schedule In Full

4.20 Pot Conrad Black. Live coverage of all the latest opinions of the proprietor.

6.00 Auberon Wars. Robot columnists battle it out. This week Frank Johnson's "Windbag" takes on Alice Thomson's dreaded "Waffler".

7.00 News with Trinny Woodall and Susannah Constantine. All the day's hemlines.

8.30 University Challenge. A number of well-connected children graduate from university and are asked to write leaders about subjects they know nothing about. This week: Peterhouse Cambridge vs. Trinity Cambridge.

9.00 A history of Britain by W.F. Deedes. An eye witness account of the last 2000 years by Britain's oldest inhabitant.

10.00 Top of the Popes 2. Christopher House looks back on some marvellous Popes and wonders whether everyone should be a catholic. (Regional variation: N. Ireland viewers will see "Ready, steady, march!" with celebrity presenter Paisley Harriot.)

11.00 The Sky At Night With Charles Moore. Charles stares into space and tries to find some stars.

11.20 Nudesnight presented by Liz Hurley in *that* dress.

12.00 Closedown due to ratings slumping to match those of Daily Telegraph 974,000 (not including copies given away on Air Malta's shuttle service to Larnaca).

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

William Blake AT TATE BRITAIN
I THINK GORE SHOULD CONCEDE, AND LET BUSH LEAD US ALL TO HELL
The Imagination is not a State it is the Human Existence itself
DID YOU SEE THE PROGRAMME ABOUT HIM ON T.V? NOR DID I, I WATCHED A TAPE OF THE WEAKEST LINK THAT WOMAN IS SO RUDE SHE'S NO DIVINE IMAGE MORE LIKE A TYGER
THE TURNER PRIZE IS NEXT DOOR. JERUSALEM IT IS NOT I FEAR!
I DONT KNOW HOW HE GOT IN, HE SAYS HIS NAME IS NEBUCHADNEZZAR HE LOOKS LIKE A BEGGAR TO ME
LIFE MASK OF BLAKE
THE TRAFFIC FROM PRIMROSE HILL WAS A NIGHTMARE!
JERUSALEM IS AT WAR!
HEATH

"The lightning struck the metal stud in her tongue"

POLLY FILLER

HALF-TERM! What a nightmare. Whoever thought that giving children a week's holiday in the middle of term was a good idea *must* have been a man. (And should therefore have been shot!)

What are you meant to do with your little darling when he says he is bored after five minutes at home? See Dinosaurs? (Yawn) Go swimming? (And get my hair wet?) Trail round a museum? (I've got a column to write for God's sake!)

And the weather doesn't help. Thanks a lot, God (another man, naturally), who has chosen this particular week to open the heavens and turn the Filler garden into a muddy swamp. Great!

And what about the useless Simon? That's a rhetorical question, by the way, because Simon, of course, is yet another man – so, instead of spending the day reading Charlie a story and doing puppet shows for his friends, Simon claims he has to write a column about how awful half-term is for a Sunday newspaper! And, for some reason, this involves going to the local "Bar Sportivo" and watching pro-celebrity draughts on Channel Five, starring Stephen Fry and Victoria Coren. Typical!

BUT where's the Palestinian au-pair, you might ask? Well, wouldn't you know it, war has conveniently broken out (again!) in the silly girl's homeland (more men up to no good!) and she's skived off, claiming "compassionate leave".

What about some compassion for us hard-working mothers confronted with seven days of hell, juggling family, career and choosing what to wear at the Booker Prize?

No wonder some of us chose to dump our infants with their grandparents for the week and catch some winter sun in the Algarve. And who can blame us? Men, I expect.

© Polly Filler.

OLD WOMAN FALLS OVER

by **Our Entire Staff**

AN OLD woman fell over yesterday at her London home. Her condition was later reported to be "satisfactory".

ON OTHER PAGES

Floods Chaos Sweeps Britain	2-26
Transport System Collapses	27-36
Government "to shoot fuel protestors"	37

The Democrats released a dossier of allegations that the lawyers will investigate. One claimed that electoral problems in Palm Beach County, where there were reports of ballot papers confusing people so that they voted for the Reform Party's Pat Buchanan by misatake,

The Times

U.S. ELECTIONS

FINAL RESULTS

Bush $100,000,819
Gore $100,000,204

The Democrats have called for a recount after final figures showed George Bush edging ahead of Al Gore in the race to buy the Presidency of the United States.

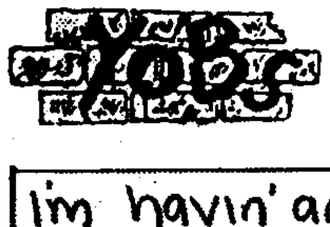
The Sun

10 Reasons Why A Swede Shouldn't Be Allowed To Run The England Football Team

1. He's Swedish
2. He's got a foreign name
3. Looks foreign
4. Speaks a foreign language
5. Isn't called Tel
6. Or Bobby
7. Or Kevin
8. Or Ron
9. Er...
10. That's it.

Not in tomorrow's Sun

10 Reasons Why An Australian Shouldn't Be Allowed To Run The Country



HUSBAND

THE GUARDIAN

Dumb?

A poll commissioned by the Guardian has revealed startling gaps in the cultural knowledge of young British adults – with this in mind, we raise the question of whether Britain is a nation in irreversible cultural decline. In a serious attempt to address these and other related issues, the Guardian invites you to check out its totally wicked new magazine, which features an in-depth interview with Fatboy Slim, a brilliant Lara Croft wallposter – *plus* all the very latest soap gossip. Sorted!

TORTOISE AND HARE — TOO CLOSE TO CALL

by Our Race Staff **E. Sopp**

MR GEORGE W. Tortoise was last night awaiting confirmation as winner of the most extra-ordinary race in the history of fables.

In the early hours of the morning it looked as if Mr Al Hare had won and the American TV networks declared him the victor. But as the hours ticked by it appeared that Mr Tortoise, often criticised for being a bit slow, had in fact pulled off a remarkable come-back.

The pundits then declared Mr Tortoise as the overall champion only to find that Mr Hare had woken up and staged a dramatic last minute dash for the line.

Hare Brained

Finally, as dawn broke on the 94th day of the race, the organisers declared that there was indeed a loser – America.

ROYAL NAVY 2000

"Now, now, Bo'sun, you know the rules – no public displays of affection!"

PRESIDENT CLINTON

An Apology

IN RECENT years, in common with all other newspapers, we may have given the impression that President William Jefferson Clintstone III was without question the worst President in the entire history of the United States. Headlines such as "Sleazeball Clinton In New Sex Scandal", "Impeach President Liar Now", "Did Clinton Personally Order Slaying Of JFK As Part Of Nixon Whitewatergate Cigar Conspiracy?" may have led readers to think that we in some way felt that President Clinton was unworthy of the high office of chief executive.

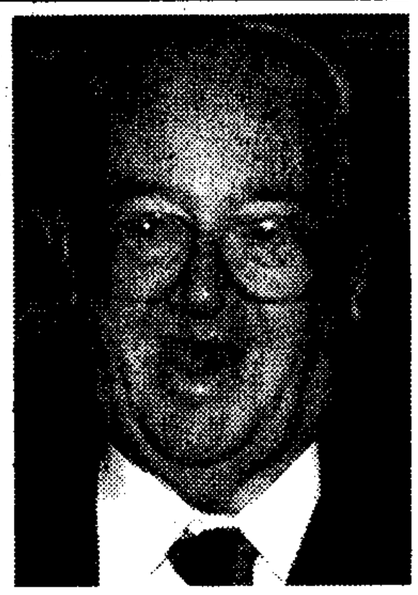
Having seen these two new guys we now realise that President Clinton is undoubtedly the greatest President in the history of the United States and a political genius without parallel, who has been personally responsible for the economic miracle that has made America the happiest and most blessed nation since records began. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused to our readers and agree to pay our columnists even more money to get it wrong in future.

Professional Conduct Committee

The Committee will consider the case of Dr Y M D Chan who in October 1999 is alleged to have behaved in an inappropriate, irresponsible and threatening manner through the wearing of full military combat dress at the Hospital's A & E Dept and brandishing an imitation fireman in the car park of the Hospital. Dr Chan was a Senior House Officer at the Hospital.

General Medical Council

THAT JOHN MORTIMER-AT-100 INTERVIEW IN FULL



by Philippa Page

A Private Eye Digest Service

YOU would never think he is 100. When we meet at the Ivy, he is already sitting in his favourite seat.

"Let's have some champers, shall we? It's awfully naughty, isn't it?" says the twinkly-eyed QC turned playwright, of the immortal Rumpole...

"...can't do up my shoelaces any more..." "...still fancy a spot of the other at 100..." "...twinkle in his eye..." "more champagne, darling..." "...can't get my socks off..." "...new book coming out next week..." "as dear Johnny Gielgud once told me..." "...wife goes fox-hunting... blind father... agreeable house in Chilterns... New Labour... Blair very disappointing... more champagne... which one are you?"

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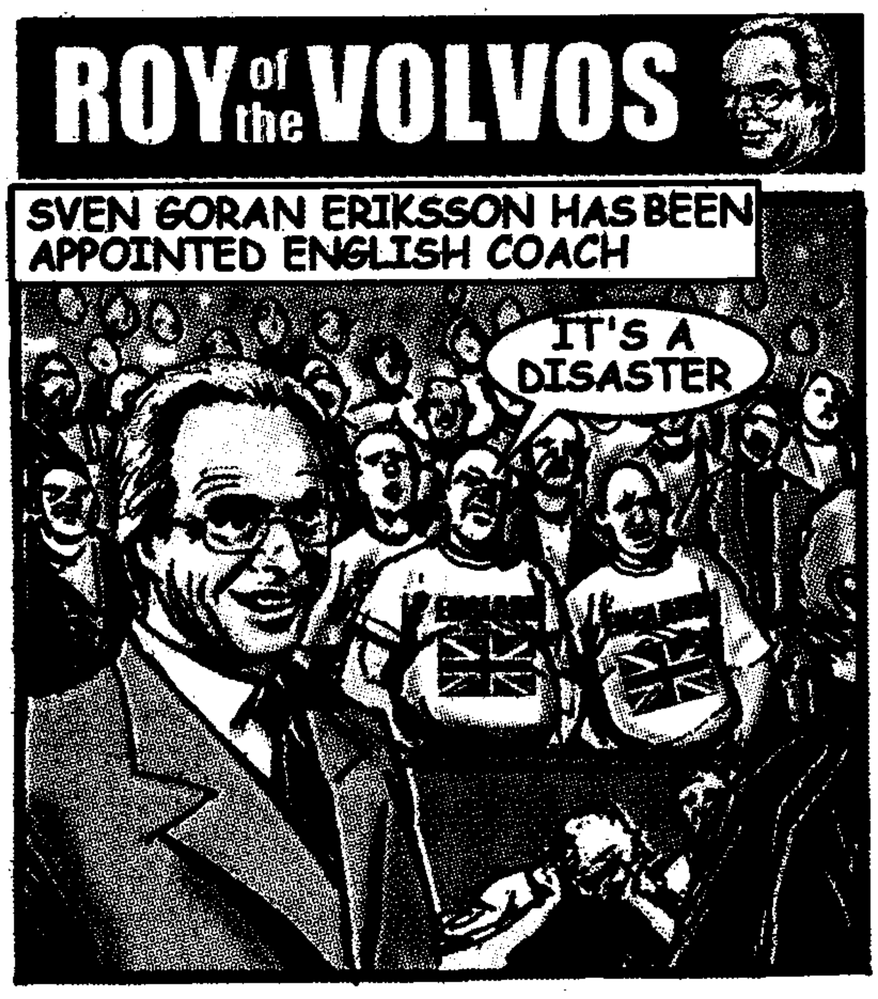
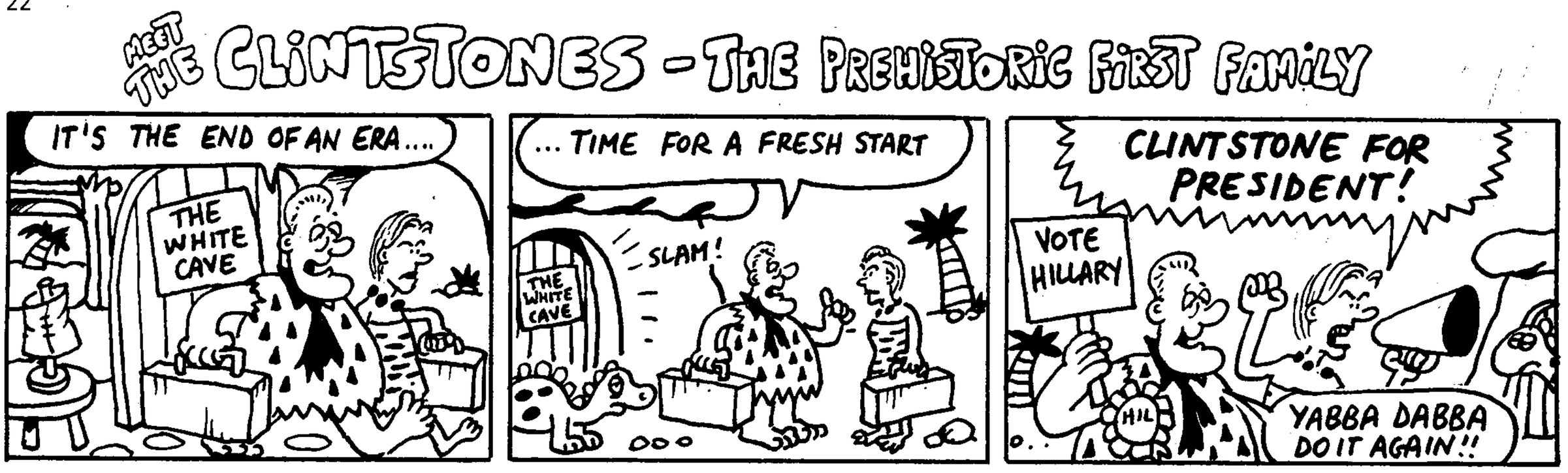


THIS GUY DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ENGLISH FOOTBALL
WHY?
COME ON YOU REDNECKS
THREE EGGS ON OUR FACE
OTHERWISE HE WOULD NEVER HAVE TAKEN THE JOB!
COOPER.



THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

'Standards Are Appalling' Says Woodhead

BY OUR EDUCATION STAFF
LUNCHTIME O'FSTED

IN A sensational attack on his new employee, former schools inspector Chris Woodhead yesterday claimed that standards at the Daily Telegraph had been "allowed to fall far below an acceptable national level".

"I was shocked when I arrived at the Telegraph," he said, "to find that most of the journalists were illiterate, lazy and incompetent."

Conrad Blackboard

"The whole paper," Mr Woodhead continued, "reeks of half-baked, wishy-washy Sixties culture instead of the traditional values that the paper used to stand for.

"I was appalled," he said, "to see pictures of half-dressed women all over the news pages, feeble interviews with pop stars on the arts pages and blatant propaganda for legalising marijuana in the editorials."

Mr Woodhead said that he put the blame for the collapse in standards firmly on the shoulders of the Telegraph's editor, Mr Charles Moore, whom he accused of being "weak and ineffectual."

Evening Standards

"It is all jolly unfair," said Mr Moore. "Everyone here is doing the best they can, in very difficult circumstances with limited resources.

"We have no canteen and have to work in a rundown docklands environment."

Mr Woodhead, however, is unrepentant and plans to send in a "hit squad" from the Times to restore confidence in the "sink" newspaper.

Exclusive to the Daily Telegraph

"I'm not just Richard Ingrams's girlfriend," says Richard Ingrams's girlfriend **29**

MUSLIM 60in WIDE
Only £2.20m Egytian quality
Advert, Champion Shopper, Yorks

One bedroom first floor Flat
inconvenient location with a garage
£68,950
Bristol Observer

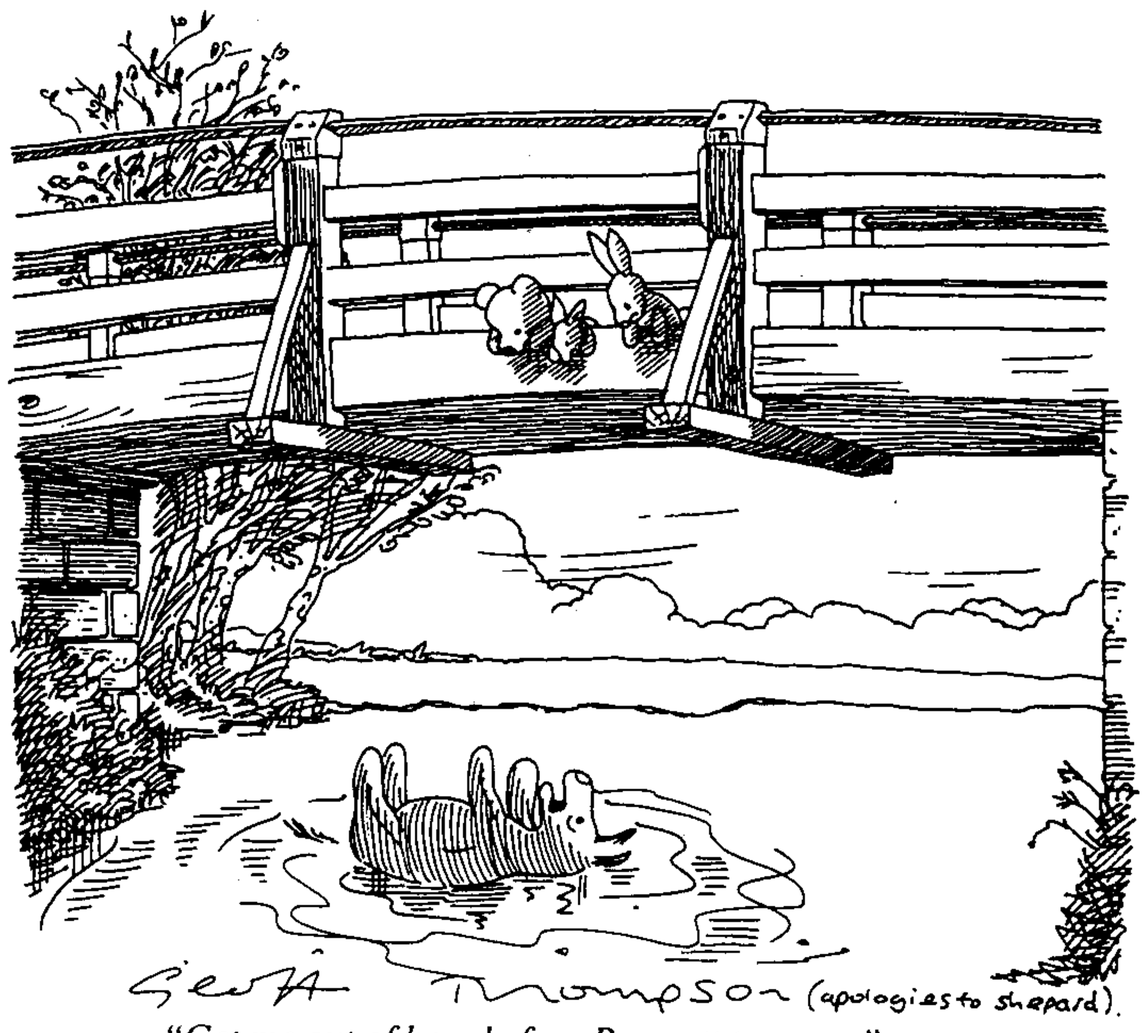
POLICE BRING CHAOS TO BRITAIN

by Our Fuel Protest Staff **Petrolella Shortage**

A HUGE convoy of policemen brought London to a halt today as millions of officers joined in a very small fuel protest and succeeded in stopping the remaining three white transit vans from parking up at the Little Chef Drive-Thru at Nuneaton Services.

As teams of policemen equipped with helicopters, seek-and-destroy ground-to-air missiles and thermonuclear truncheons converged on the capital, a defiant Inspector Knacker told reporters, "You are all under arrest for blocking the police convoy. I have got you on film and I know where you live."

Said one aggrieved fuel spokesman, "The police are stopping vital protestors getting through to their place of protest. It is an outrage the police are causing chaos, which is our job."



"Get me out of here before Prescott turns up"

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

It was simpler then. Communism promised hope, equality, a new dawn- that's why Picasso and other leading artists joined the Party.
Now it's all cynicism, compromise and corporate superficiality.
That's why we all joined New Labour.
Exactly.
ZZZ

TV Film Choice

Goodbye Mr Woodhead

(1947) *(Black and White)*

CLASSIC British tearjerker, with dedicated teacher Mr Woodhead who falls in love with one of his sixth formers and has to leave. Robert Donat stars as Woodhead with James Robertson Justice as David Blunkett.

VERY IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

From Virgin First Great Sweetex North East

Due to factors beyond our control, the following revised timetable will operate until May 3 2006 (subject to revision).

Railtrack PLC **Table 94a**

London, Paddington	dep	0723	0738	0750	0753	.....	0805
Mowlam Junction	dep	0730	0742	0745	0757	.....	0815
Massingberd-Super-Mare	dep	.....	0748	.....	.....	0818	.....
Beckham	dep	.....	.....	.....	0812	0832	.....
Ashdown	dep	0744	0757	.....	0814	0827	0844
Birmingham New Street	dep	0802	0819	0829	0832	0846	0849
Birmingham Old Street	dep	0802	.....	0822	.....	0832	0852
Coronation Street	dep	0807	0829	.....	0837	0859	.....
Gregdyke Parkway	dep	0814	.....	0850	.....	0920	.....
Hurley Central	dep	0820	0850	.....	0920	0926	0929
West Frostrup	arr	0858	.....	0908	0927	.....	.....
East Frostrup	dep	0903	.....	0913	0932	.....	0943
Karachi Central	dep	.....	0900	.....	0913	0918	0923
Widdecombe	arr	0907	0925	0930	.....	0937	0940

a. Mowlam Junction is closed due to flooding. A bus service to Stroud and Gloucester will operate on Wednesdays between 0045 and 0615 hrs (except on Wednesdays).

b. All trains to Ashdown are cancelled until further notice. Passengers are advised to seek other means of transport.

c. For safety reasons, speed restrictions will be in force between Gregdyke Parkway and Hurley Central between 0725 and 0724 hrs. The speed limit approved by the Health and Safety Executive will be 0 mph.

d. The Westlife Express between Beckham and Ashdown North (not advertised) will commence its journey at Redwood until January 24. It will then go forward via Althorp Park, Portillo East and St Petersburg, to terminate somewhere in the Gobi Desert. The service will be running approximately 45 minutes late.

e. Coaches to form the 1427 stopping train from Stothard to Wapshott will divide at Tonbridge, due to a collapse of the track. The first two coaches will continue under water to Lewes and all stations to Atlantis North. The rear three coaches will burst into flames.

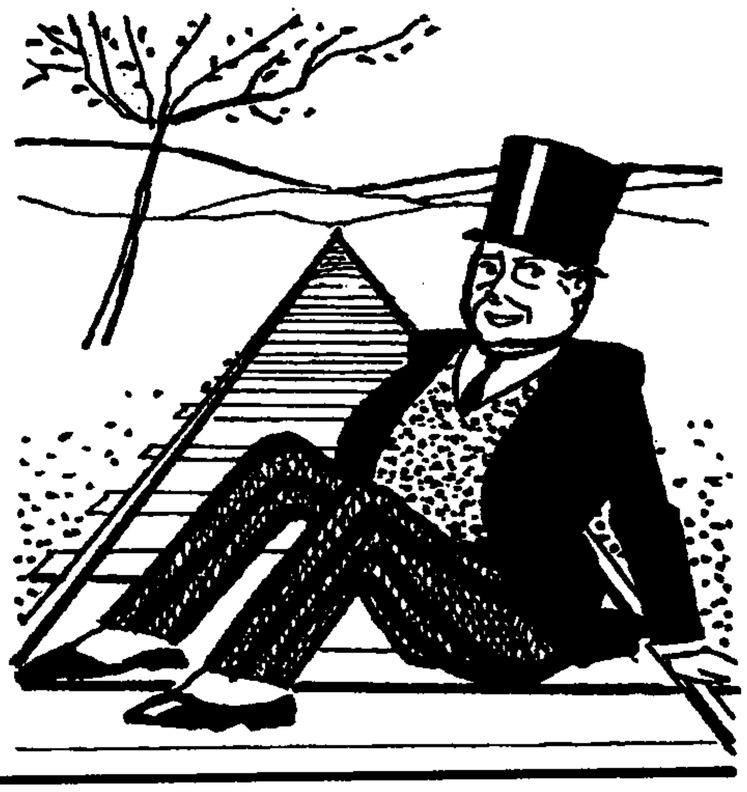
f. Owing to adverse weather conditions, it will not be possible to provide customer information of any kind, except on the internet at www.notrains.com.muta

g. Customers are warned that the railway companies are in no way responsible for the running of the train services, and that any customer daring to ask staff about the timing or destination of trains will face prosecution (maximum penalty £50,000 or five years imprisonment).

For the well-being of customers, all our trains operate a non-running policy. *(Surely non-smoking? G. Corbett).*

THOMAS

THE PRIVATISED TANK ENGINE



THOMAS was unhappy about the mess the Fat Controller had made of the Railway. "Why don't you do the decent thing?" said Thomas. "Very well," said the Fat Controller and he threw himself in front of a train.

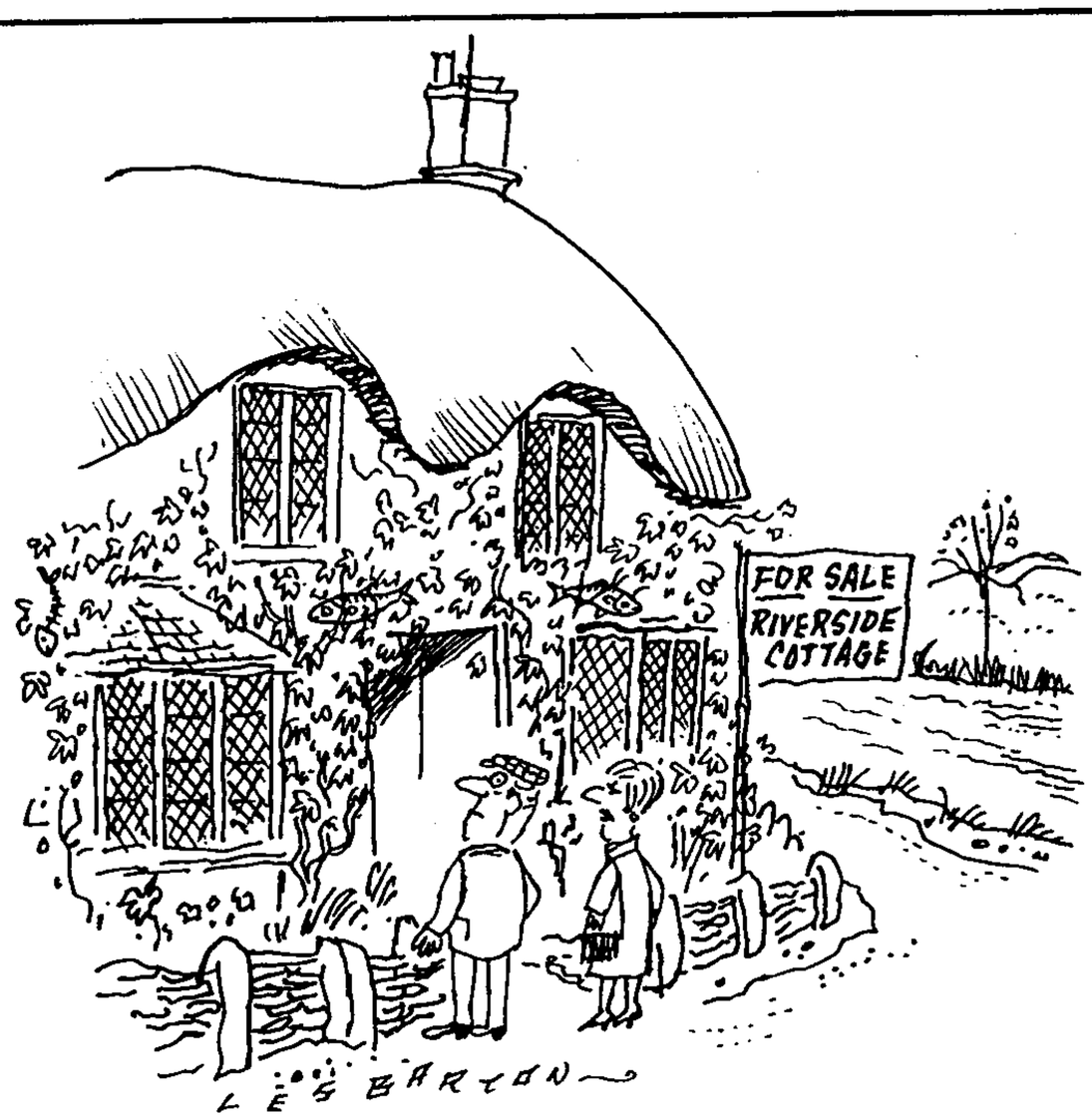
But of course there weren't any trains. Crafty old Fat Controller!

SHOULD THE BARCLAY TWINS BE SEPARATED?

asks Eye Medical Correspondent **Dr Thomas Utterfraud**

IN A delicate operation lasting 30 seconds, Her Majesty The Queen tried to separate the world-famous Barclay twins, who have been joined together since birth by a huge pile of money.

Both twins are said to be "comfortably off" said a spokesman.



DIARY

ALAN WATKINS

There has been disagreement in recent years over the etymological derivation and correct spelling of the word "Burp". Historians may care to note the correct version, which follows in the next paragraph.

Contrary to the version put about by the formidable Mr Roy Spangle in his admirable Fleet Street memoir, "17 Years a Deputy Home Affairs Correspondent for Beaverbrook", now out of print, the term "Burp" was in fact coined by Mr Peter ("Pete") Greenwood, the formidable chief sub-editor on the old Daily Sketch from 1951-67.

Mr Greenwood was a man of medium height, who wore dark brown shoes of a conventional styling.

The story goes that, three-quarters of the way through his preferred breakfast tipple, a triple brandy-and-claret with malt whisky chaser, in El Vino in late October 1965, Mr Greenwood was offered another, to which he replied with this memorable: "Burp!"

Prior to that occasion, the traditional eructation had been "Barf" (sometimes rendered "Barph") or "Blurrgh" (often incorrectly pronounced with a silent "g"). So when Greenwood said "Burp!", and then repeated it three seconds later – "Burp!", or possibly "Burrp!" – three of us reached for our notebooks to record this historic event.

The following year, I heard the expression employed repeatedly at the Labour Party Conference, and again seven weeks later while partaking of luncheon at the Gay Hussar with Mr Tom Driberg, a formidable politician distinguished by his very slightly larger-than-average height. Today, "burp" has become the standard utterance. "Barf" and "Blurrgh" have all but disappeared, though they are still given an occasional run around the block by Sir Peregrine Worsthorne. It is, as Mr Macmillan remarked in June 1954, as well to know these things.

The late Mr John Junor was a redoubtable figure. "Never trust a horse that winks" was a phrase he would intone over a convivial glass of Teacher's whisky (2/6, or five shillings for a double, cheaper before 6.00pm and on Sundays) in El Vino. "A pigeon should not be eaten if its wings are still flapping" was another.

A formidable man of average height, he was given to wearing a leather belt with his trousers. It was rumoured that this was to keep them up. I once set eyes upon the soles of his shoes. To my untutored eye, they looked perfectly normal. I was to discover later that this was indeed what they were. Though eccentric in other areas, he had, it appeared, no unusual tastes in shoes.

The third best Junor-and-household-flowers story is invariably misreported. The story goes like this. He once took me to one side, clasped my shoulder and advised me to buy tulips. "Only poofs like daffodils" he remarked. This amusing story is often recounted inaccurately, with dahlias instead of daffodils.

The position of the Liberal Democratic Party – often wrongly referred to as the Liberal Democrat Party – in twenty-one years' time is a matter of conjecture.

I make no predictions. But if, as seems likely, Mr Charles Kennedy – wrongly believed to be a nephew of the President Kennedy – sees his party lose seats at the next General Election, then in the following election, which will be held in October, or possibly September, 2005, he will have a hard job keeping his head above water.

By May 2009, Mr Kennedy may find himself occupying a position similar to that of Mr Leonard Hutchings in the historic autumn of 1923. By June 2010 he will be lucky to fare much better than Mr Arnold Blackstone-Leigh in the August and subsequent September of 1937.

However, the signs are that in the snap General Election of the first two weeks of November 2012, the Lib Dems will enjoy a change in its fortunes, gaining perhaps 29 or 30 parliamentary seats, some of them marginal. This will put them in good stead for the General Election of Spring 2016, possibly under a new leader. They will then return to their present healthy position when the polls close in mid-March 2021, allowing them to enter the May 2025 election with renewed confidence. This would put them in a good position to push through some sort of Proportional Representation, partially amended on the Burroughs/ Burleigh 1931 model, in time for the subsequent election in June 2024. But politics is a notoriously chancy business; I make no predictions.

Mr Adolf Hitler was a formidable politician of average height, clean shaven but for a postage-stamp moustache placed with commendable exactitude in the centre of that area between his nose and his top lip.

Though he was admired by many, and in addition possessed an admirable working knowledge of the German language, I never warmed to him. Perhaps I sensed a reckless side to him, for I was later to hear that he had wreaked havoc in his home country and abroad.

He was a teetotaller, with non-descript elbows. It was said of him that he had a bit of a temper, a trait he undoubtedly shared with Mr J. Seaforth-Smedley, the unfortunate Conservative and Unionist Party candidate in the infamous 1932 Stockport North by-election.

November 1989 proved a redoubtable month. Mr Jack Huggins, the Observer's chief sub-editor left for The Sunday Express, to be replaced by the formidable Mr Patrick "Pat" Parkins, a man of medium height, who was to appoint none other than Mr Trevor Banks as his deputy. This left a gap on the Sports Desk, filled by Mr Clive Astley. Mr Astley had well-brushed hair and pronounced the word "gin" to rhyme with "din", a common mistake.

Halfway through this era of historic and tumultuous change, the news came through that the Berlin Wall had fallen, thus handing me on a plate my subject for that week. My 1257-word piece that Sunday reminded readers that in 1951 Mr Hartley-Crossland's garden wall on the North East side of marginal Beaminster constituency had also fallen. There had been no repercussions worth worrying about. As the late J.P. Stopes once remarked to me over a glass of formidable Brouilly, "It's never worth getting over-excited. You look as though you could do with a top-up, Alan."

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

WITH MY HECTIC SCHEDULE I NEVER STAY IN THE SAME PLACE LONG, DO I JOHNSON....
I SPEND PART OF THE YEAR IN L.A., SOME TIME IN THE U.K... AND THE REST I DIVIDE BETWEEN SWITZERLAND AND FRANCE....
I'M A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD, YOU COULD SAY...
YOU'VE STILL GOT TO PAY TAX SOMEWHERE, SIR...
BUT WHY?!! IT'S SO INIQUITOUS...

Literary Review

Look at US

Hooking Up Tom Wolfe
(Cape, £17.99)
The Golden Age Gore Vidal
(LittleBrown, £17.99)
Bellow — A Biography
James Atlas *(Faber, £25)*

THE sense that the senior US authors are competing for the single occupancy of some Write House of American letters is encouraged by the fact that one of the current contenders — Gore Vidal — is the cousin of Al Gore. And, apart from Vidal, two of the other most prominent candidates — Saul Bellow and Tom Wolfe — put out their latest campaign literature in the very month of the 2000 election. It's clear from these books that the egotistical jousting of the top-dollar novelists makes presidential politics look like a polite disagreement between friends. These guys will still be demanding recounts from beyond the grave.

The subject of *Bellow*, for example, has actually got what all his contemporaries crave: the Nobel Prize For Literature. But James Atlas's gossipy biography, finding more space for the broads and bank accounts than the books, reveals that this isn't enough. In old age in Vermont he suffers, according to Atlas, a conviction that he has been under-praised and underestimated, railing against "feminist" book editors who fail to appreciate his work. The implication is obvious: although he alone may have shaken the King of Sweden's hand, there are still irritatingly other American novelists being published and admired.

This Bellow biography also makes fascinatingly explicit the phallic sub-text in the American literary struggle. It was by no means solely for artistic reasons that Norman Mailer's books got longer and longer in the course of his career or that Tom Wolfe's hardbacks have to be grasped with two hands. And Bellow, Atlas reveals, is the only senior American writer to have been painted in the nude. This occurred during an affair — extra to one of his five marriages — with an artist. Her depiction of Bellow includes, apparently, a "thick" penis. Shortly after the book's publication, you suspect, the sixth Mrs Mailer may have been heard shouting: "Hey, Norm, did you borrow my tape measure?"

The cock-fighting between American novelists is further laid bare in Tom Wolfe's new collection of factual and fictional shorts, *Hooking Up*. In an essay called "My Three Stooges", the author of *The Bonfire Of The Vanities* describes the public reception of his second novel *A Man In Full* by a trio of literary old-stagers: Norman Mailer, John Updike, and John Irving.

All three seniors savaged Wolfe's Atlanta epic in print or on television, suggesting it was "not literature". To an observer, it was apparent what had happened here. These three writers had been struggling for decades to write books which not only sold best but were critically worshipped. Then a mere journalist walked in late and won the fight. It seemed to them that the ballot had been rigged.

It would have been better, though, if Wolfe had left this judgement to others. But, in an essay which shows the fatal elephantiasis of the ego which claims all successful writers in America, Wolfe calls a dizzying list of witnesses in his defence: "Shakespeare, Balzac, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Gogol, Zola, Ibsen, and Shaw, not to mention Mark Twain, all of whom were enormously popular in their own day — Dickens, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Zola published their work serially in magazines — Ibsen and Shaw gloried in their box office appeal..." Just Tom and a few hundred of his genius friends.

Norman Mailer actually wrote a book called *Advertisements For Myself* but this could be the sub-title of most books by the big cats of Am Lit. *The Golden Age* completes Gore Vidal's entertaining seven-volume epic about American politics but, in reaching the mid-20th century, finds Vidal writing for the first time about events that he lived through and people he knew.

There are benefits in this — a sweet account of the opening night of *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Gore's friend Tennessee Williams — but the drawback is the irresistible temptation of self-inclusion. Gore, of course, can't say no. There's a scene in which the brilliant young author Gore Vidal is described by a fictional character as writing as well as Shakespeare. Admiring reference is made to Vidal's play *The Best Man*.

The reader of any of these books should also note that one of the reasons given by Salman Rushdie for decamping to Manhattan was that the English literary world is just so bitchy.

Ian Hislop will be signing copies of:

Private Eye Annual 2000
Son of Blair – The Sequel
Colemanballs 10

at W H SMITH,
Victoria Station on
Friday 1st December
5.00pm – 6.00pm

To reserve signed copies
contact Colin Nairn on 020 7630 9677

Books & Bookmen

■ AT the Booker Prize ceremony, chairman of the judges Simon Jenkins told the assembled throng that the choice of Margaret Atwood was "not unanimous, but a consensus" and that "all the judges were happy with the result". Er, not entirely.

Discussing her involvement in the Absurder, fellow judge Mariella "Panorama" Frostrup confessed that she was "disappointed that with such an unusual shortlist we were going to end up with a regular Booker name stealing the prize". Her "heart sank" as her choices *English Passengers* by Matthew Kneale and *The Keepers of Truth* by Michael Collins "fell like skittles".

Unsurprisingly, the fragrant Frostrup gave Bloomsbury's post-ceremony bash for Atwood a wide berth, preferring to prop up the bar at the joint Hamish Hamilton/Picador party for Matthew Kneale and Trezza Azzopardi.

The chairman himself went to the winner's party where he beamed as she praised "the very tasteful and brave Booker judges" — a compliment that was returned fully in Jenkins' gushing *Times* column the following morning.

■ ALAN WATKINS' memoir of his 40-year stint in the world of journalism (*A Short Walk Down Fleet Street*, Duckworth, £18) has attracted some suitably generous reviews from all his friends.

Longterm Watkins fanciers may perhaps worry over the book's provenance. In his introduction, Watkins notes that three short sections — memoirs of his father, Beaverbrook and Iain Macleod, first saw the light in a volume called *Brief Lives*, first published in 1982, "which is now out of print". No one begrudges journalists their party pieces, of course, but it must be said that the anecdotes about Tom Driberg's interest in Watkins' then teenage son, Philip Hope-Wallace's mistrust of *Guardian* subeditors, Paul Johnson on the industrial relations legislation of the late 1960s ("Harold, Barbara and I are going to see this through together") and Sir John Junor's journalistic maxims ("An ounce of emotion is worth a ton of fact" etc), not to mention half-a-dozen other old remembrances, have a decidedly familiar ring. A little research reveals that they, too, appeared in *Brief Lives*, whose unexpected renaissance, for a work so long dead, one can only marvel at. But then a book can be out of print while its contents, mysteriously, survive.

■ SO, Waterstone's md David "Mekon" Kneale has received a massive vote of confidence from his bosses at HMV Media with Alan "Weasel" Giles' decision to appoint a new group chief operating officer over his head, in the form of former HMV Europe boss Brian McLaughlin.

Apart from such corporate emasculation, the Mekon has been having a hard time of late, what with small publishers preparing to lynch him, following a letter from Waterstone's HQ demanding that they sell their books to the chain at discount levels that would push most of them into the red.

Whoever organises his diary, then, should be taken out and shot, given that the poor chap is this week scheduled to address the autumn seminar of the Independent Publishers Guild — the membership of which is composed of the self-same aggrieved small publishers. Kneale will be talking about "the challenges of competing in a crowded market... [giving] an insight into how Waterstone's expects to work most effectively with publishers in the future". The IPG's eminently reasonable committee has promised to minimise the prospects of the event becoming a bloodbath by soliciting questions in advance by e-mail. Those who have seen the way in which independents fight for their lists, however, don't fancy the Mekon's chances.

■ FOLLOWING the last *Eye*'s revelation that Naim Attallah-Disgusting has long preferred to, ahem, outsource his writing activities, Attallah has expressed his intention to flog off all of his businesses, ostensibly because he is 70 and eager to retire, but really because he is intensely short of cash following a run-in with a conman who promised to refinance the Namara group, but instead ran off with a large pile of spondulicks.

'Bookworm'

IT CONTAINS SOME VERY EMBARRASSING REVELATIONS
ASHDOWN DIARIES
APPARENTLY HE USED TO BE LIB DEM LEADER!
ASHDOWN DIARIES
POOR OLD PANTSDOWN!

IN THE BACK

A STAR IN THE EASTOE...

Roger Eastoe: a star is born?

NO ONE has yet been appointed to recite the final epitaph for the dome. Since the burial will be a moving and even spiritual occasion, why has no one thought of asking the Hinduja brothers to perform the last rites?

Readers of *Eye* 963 will recall that the brothers stepped in with the crucial contribution for the "spirit zone" which enabled the harassed government to open the dome on time. The donation greatly enhanced the reputation of the Hindujas in the eyes of "new" Labour. Just as home office ministers were rejecting the application for British citizenship of that other millionaire foreigner, Mohamed Fayed, the Hindujas' application for British citizenship was greeted with much sympathy.

Gopichand Hinduja was granted British nationality on 4 November 1997. Then came the dome donation. Then on 23 September 1999 came the granting of British nationality to Gopichand's brother Srichand. By the time the dome was opened in such style and ceremony, both brothers were British citizens.

For reasons that are not at all clear, the Hindujas' application to set up a new British-Asian bank aimed at wealthy Asians all over the world did not meet with the same success. As Slicker reported in April 1999 (*Eye* 974), negotiations started long ago, in 1995, but came to nothing. And this failure was in spite of the fact that the Hindujas had been cleared by Swiss regulators to take a substantial stake in the newly-opened Amas bank.

The attitude of the Swiss regulators was, as Slicker pointed out, specially generous since the Swiss authorities were locked in a long battle with the Hindujas over disclosure of documents alleged to be linked to the sale of arms to the Indian government by the Swedish company Bofors. The documents have at last been disclosed and the Hindujas have been charge-sheeted (see last *Eye*).

None of this has for a moment dented the Hindujas' ambition. Indeed, they are the favourites to take over the Express newspapers and their subsidiaries. To this end they are widely believed to have hired the services of Roger Eastoe, a former director of Mirror Group Newspapers.

Mr Eastoe is much loved by former *Mirror* hacks who remember his crucial role in the "election" of a new chief executive David Montgomery in 1992. Montgomery's bid to become chief executive was strongly supported by the receivers of the Maxwell empire, Arthur Andersen, and Montgomery's former proprietor Rupert Murdoch, not to mention all his former colleagues at News International who were delighted to see him go.

His candidature was strongly supported by the chairman of the defunct Mirror board, Maxwell's former merchant banker Sir Robert Clark, and former *Times* editor Charlie Wilson whom Maxwell had promoted.

But two other members of the board, including Lord Williams of Elvel, were not so happy about Montgomery's appointment and voted against it. Into the breach stepped the crucial fifth man, Roger Eastoe, whose vote for Montgomery ensured the latter's triumphant appointment as chief executive by a historic vote of confidence: 3-2. Montgomery stormed into the *Mirror*, sacking anyone associated with a trade union. The *Mirror* and *People* editors were sacked and the circulation of all the papers plummeted, but Montgomery, Clark, Wilson and Eastoe reaped huge fortunes from the share options they voted themselves. It is hard to think of anyone better qualified than Roger Eastoe to represent the Hinduja brothers at the Express.

SCRAM, CRAMS!

SIX years and many millions of pounds after probation union NAPO declared that CRAMS, the "revolutionary" computer system for tracking offenders, was useless and dangerous (see *Eyes passim*), a home office report has finally concluded that Crams is... useless and dangerous.

After throwing £100m at the project, home office minister Paul Boateng has at last said it is to be scrapped — just the latest computer cock-up in his department (cf passports, immigration and asylum, etc.)

The report by Sir Graham Smith, chief inspector of probation, was merely the latest in a series to highlight flaws in a system that couldn't keep track of criminals' aliases and was said to be a nightmare to use.

Smith's report said probation staff were forced to rely on paper files and card indexes to keep information on offenders "presenting a risk of harm to the public".

It went on: "In view of the high priority given by ministers to managing risk and public protection, particularly in relation to sex offenders, the piecemeal nature of these developments was a matter of serious concern."

If Boateng thinks the end of CRAMS is the end of the matter, he is mistaken. The national audit office (NAO), alerted by reports in the *Eye* last year, has also been investigating – and a scathing report condemning mismanagement and the waste of taxpayers' money is due in the new year.

WISE AND WHEREFORES

THE appeal of Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh, convicted in 1996 of bombing the Israeli embassy in London in 1994, has been adjourned following dramatic new evidence disclosed to the defence.

Tim Wise, an Australian freelance journalist, read about the appeal and told a strange story to defence lawyers. He said that in 1994, some time after the bombing, he rented a room to a man who called himself Mohammad. Wise came across some documents and maps hidden in a basin, which suggested an interest in an attack on the Israeli embassy. He contacted the police in Fulham and showed the documents to officers who took them away. He never heard from them again.

Neither has anyone else. Wise's story appeared in the *Observer* and *Sunday Times* on 29 October. Did Fulham police really see such documents and, if so, what did they do to ensure they were passed to the authorities? (Certainly the defence has never heard of them).

The *Eye* put these questions to the Metropolitan police. Here is the full reply: "It would be inappropriate to comment on any aspect of the appeal whilst it is currently being held."

Which? hunt

THE Consumers' Association (CA) is more interested in protecting its reputation, it seems, than in giving correct advice to the country's 25 million mobile phone users.

Last April *Which?* magazine, the CA's mouthpiece, caused huge controversy when it said that hands-free telephone kits – ie headphones – could actually increase electromagnetic radiation in the brain to more than three times the level recorded when a mobile telephone is used in the normal way.

This ran contrary to all previous advice and studies which suggest that hand-free kits might be safer, and the report caused many worried phone users to discard their headphones in confusion.

But *Which?* – whose reputation has been built on testing washing machines, cars and other appliances – was delving into an area of almost pure scientific research where different rules apply. And when experts, including some commissioned by the department of trade and industry (DTI), questioned the results as counter-intuitive, the magazine at first refused to release the full research data. Then it admitted that there might have been flaws in its method.

This month, however, it did a U-turn and suddenly announced that it was standing by its findings. At a press conference at its London HQ, the CA presented what it described as new results, which showed that *Which?* was right all along. All very curious – as the CA was really just repeating the same old tests on the same old equipment.

Meanwhile four entirely separate organisations have tried and failed to repeat the *Which?* results, including the DTI and Australia's answer to *Which?*, *Choice* magazine. Each has concluded, as expected, that hands-free kits do reduce electric fields in the brain – to less than 5 percent of the level experienced when a telephone is held to the head.

The DTI experts have their own theory for the *Which?* team's unusual findings: that the probe used was faulty and the threefold increase it recorded was entirely attributable to error. Er... Which version is true?

TURKISH DELIGHT

THE foreign office would not answer a question from the *Eye* as to whether, as reported in the *Observer*, its officials had persuaded the home office to rule out any reference to Armenia in the commemorations of genocide that the government is organising for January.

The theme of the commemoration is that of memory – ie "lest we forget" – but the memory of the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians by Turkish troops in 1915 is apparently to be wiped out altogether. The resulting amnesia is a great triumph for the Turkish government which has been lobbying all over the world for several months to ensure that the Armenian genocide does not feature in the commemoration.

Nor is this the only diplomatic success of Turkish negotiators with the Labour government. Many greenish Labour MPs were hoping for a ministerial concession on the Ilusu dam. So many representations had been made to ministers about the appalling environmental and human rights effects of the Turkish government's plans for the dam, including the threat to the homes of hundreds of thousands of Kurds, that they were hoping at the very least that department of trade ministers would stop subsidising the project through the export credits guarantee department (ECGD).

No hope, however. In a debate on the ECGD on 2 November, trade minister and former left-winger Richard Caborn spoke up strongly for the project. "As long as the project conforms to international standards and Turkey accepts that, it is the right way to move forward," he drooled.

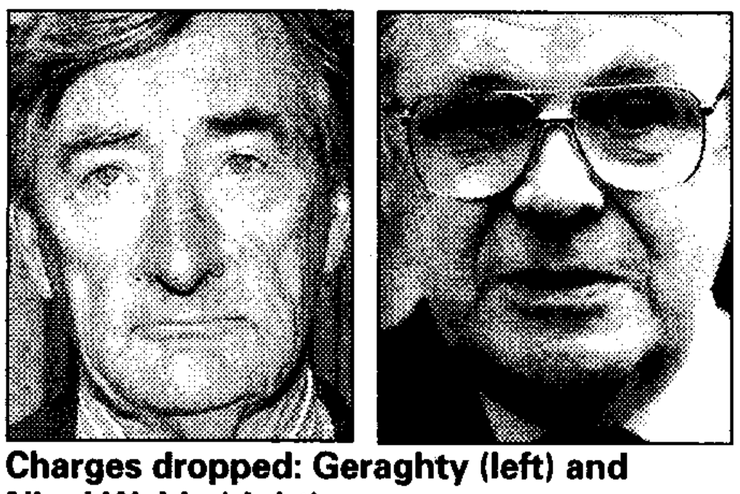
WYLDE GOOSE CHASE

AS predicted long ago by the *Eye*, the crown prosecution service (CPS) has now dropped the ludicrous official secrets act charges against Nigel Wylde, the former army colonel accused of passing information about Northern Ireland surveillance techniques to a journalist.

The questions MPs should now be asking are why were charges ever brought in the first place? Why did it take so long to withdraw them (it is nearly two years since Wylde's arrest and a year after similar charges against the journalist Tony Geraghty were dropped)? And why was a reported £500,000 of taxpayers' money wasted in the process?

Wylde had been accused of providing information for a few pages of Tony Geraghty's book, *The Irish War*, which revealed — surprise, surprise — that in these days of computer dominance, the Northern Ireland security forces use a range of sophisticated machines and programmes supposedly to keep track of terrorists, but which inevitably monitor innocent civilians too.

The CPS said earlier this month that it had now decided there was "insufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction" after studying a dossier, compiled on behalf of Wylde by another journalist, Duncan Campbell, which showed that all the controversial surveillance material in the book was (as the *Eye* reported 18 months ago) already well-known in the province.



Charges dropped: Geraghty (left) and Nigel Wylde (right)

It has now emerged that damage assessments carried out by the ministry of defence (MoD) within days of the book's publication should have alerted it to this fact long ago. MoD chiefs originally concluded that while Geraghty's book was embarrassing and irritating, it did not damage security. It was well-known that some of the surveillance details had appeared in the Northern Ireland republican press after an intelligence officer mislaid a briefcase full of confidential documents.

Were the CPS and Lord Williams (the attorney general who has to approve charges brought under the OSA) ever told of these assessments? And if not, why not? Perhaps all will become clear if Geraghty and Wylde pursue their threatened civil actions for damages against the authorities alleging wrongful arrest and false imprisonment.

BENEFITS: NEW LABOUR, NEW COMPASSION

SO, even education secretary David Blunkett has joined New Labour's controversial welfare crackdown chorus. He has told disabled people they have an obligation to "help themselves" back into work or training.

If the disabled ignore his advice and are unwilling to face regular reviews to see if they are equipped to work, they now risk stiff benefits penalties. And if they follow his advice? Er... they will almost certainly put their meagre existing benefits at risk too.

The reality is that no matter how disabled a person, if they do any kind of voluntary work, study, training, part-time paid work, therapeutic work or even a hobby, their benefits may be axed. The reason is that any activity, according to the Benefits Agency adjudicators' guide, can be construed as "capacity for work".

"Capacity for work" – even if there is no realistic prospect of finding a job – can lead to a disabled person being thrown off higher-rated incapacity benefits of around £80 to £90 a week (a tight enough budget for those with severe disabilities) on to the meaner job seekers' allowance of £52 a week.

Each year about 168,000 disabled people suddenly find themselves on job seekers' allowance, and many more find their disability benefits slashed.

Take the case of 58-year-old "Marjorie Smith" (not her real name), severely disabled following a car crash as a teenager. It left her with spinal and leg injuries, barely able to walk and in constant pain. As a hobby she makes wall hangings in her home and someone suggested her work be included in a local art exhibition. She was very proud of this first-ever achievement and was featured in the local newspaper. The Benefits Agency immediately cut her higher rated income support and disability premium, leaving her only £37.40 disability living allowance a week.

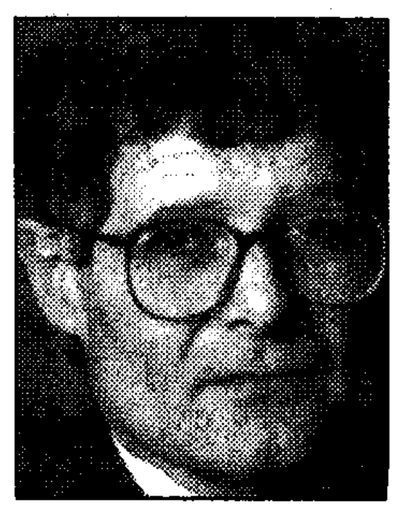
The reason, it seems, is that Marjorie sold a few of her wall-hangings (which represented years of work) for around £500 – no more than she spent on materials and certainly no more than the £15 a week she should be entitled to earn before benefits are reduced. As she awaits a hearing of her case, the £500 has long been spent on living expenses and she is now facing worrying debt.

The Citizens Advice Bureau has a growing dossier of similar cases where people with disabilities are too frightened to take on any kind of voluntary work or study – even therapeutic work – in case it triggers one of these "capacity for work" assessments.

In addition the chancellor's much-heralded disabled person's tax credit – which, like the family tax credit, is supposed to encourage people off benefit and into work – in fact gives with one hand only to take back with the other.

What ministers did not say in their briefing to MPs, which suggested that pay for any work would be enhanced by tax credits of up to £54 a week, is that subsequent reductions in housing and council tax benefit will claw back most of it. When earnings get to around £120 a week a disabled person living in, say, London is likely to lose more in such benefits than they gain from the tax credit.

Good riddance, Mr Chips?



DID Chris Woodhead, the late chief inspector of schools, fall or was he pushed?

More evidence that even education secretary David Blunkett grew weary of the loquacious chief inspector he had championed for so long emerges from the committee which supervises the appointments to commercial companies of senior civil servants and ministers.

The committee, chaired by former Tory Northern Ireland secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, meets very infrequently. The members were called to a meeting in late October to discuss a proposed move to private industry of a not very famous civil servant. To their surprise, committee members were suddenly confronted by the chief inspector of schools in person.

Mr Woodhead apparently told them he was anxious for them to consider his case urgently. He was very keen to take up a new job as a consultant and writer at the *Daily Telegraph*. (He also, it transpires, intends to join Bell Pottinger, the lobbying firm with all those juicy education-related clients.)

The committee refused to let Woodhead go to his new post at once. Members observed that as a civil servant in his position he would have access to a mass of confidential information which could be useful to a consultant to the *Daily Telegraph*. Somewhat reluctantly the committee gave him permission to take up his new job in three months — itself a concession from the usual six months delay.

The impression Woodhead conveyed to the committee was that of a man in a hurry. Though he had three years of his contract as chief inspector to run, he indicated that he wanted to leave at once, and then promptly did so, only to be damned with faint praise by the secretary of state.

The *Sunday Times* even suggested that Blunkett had threatened to gag Woodhead by releasing details of his affair in the 1970s with his pupil at Gordano school in Bristol. (This story was immediately denied by the education department, no doubt because it had on numerous occasions denied that it had any new information about the affair).

Perhaps now Woodhead has gone, someone can throw more light on the BBC's mysterious censorship of its religious affairs programme featuring Woodhead's former wife Cathy, whom Woodhead left in preference for his pupil. Filming for this programme was completed at great expense until it was abruptly pulled on orders from above...

SCOT NATS

DOES privatisation mean the end of elementary rules about appointments to high office? At National Air Traffic Services (NATS) it certainly seems so.

The Nolan rules for the appointment of chief executives of top public companies suggest that the posts should first be advertised and the applicants interviewed. Neither recommendation has been followed at NATS, which runs air traffic control for the whole nation and which the government is so keen to privatise.

The new chief executive, announced on 22 September, is Colin Chisholm, the current deputy chief executive and close friend of existing chief executive and fellow Scotsman William Semple. A NATS spokesman confirmed that the appointment had not been advertised and nor had Mr Chisholm been interviewed.

The spokesman said that in the cases of the last two chief executives, both jobs *were* advertised. So why the difference? Here is the spokesman's answer: "At the time of the previous appointments they included the position of group director and board member of the civil aviation authority... Moves to separate [*ie privatise*] NATS from the Civil Aviation Authority mean that the post of NATS chief executive no longer carries CAA Board responsibilities."

The NATS Board, said the spokesman, had recommended "internal promotion" for Mr Chisholm, and this recommendation had been accepted by the two relevant secretaries of state (Geoff Hoon and John Prescott). So that's all right, then.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE discredited board of friendless engineering conglomerate Tomkins would appear to have adopted the policy of preferring to hang together rather than hang separately. How else to explain the unwillingness or inability of compromised chairman David Newlands to force the removal of those longer standing friends of deposed dictator Greg Hutchings, toothless non-executive "watchdogs" Ali Wambold and Roger Holland, or their manifest failure to do the decent thing?

New York banker Wambold, via the transparent tabloid device of unidentified but remarkably well informed "friends", claims to be willing to go but strangely stays. Holland stays silent – at least in public. But then do they not have the drop on supposed reformer Newlands – a fellow member of the audit and remunerations committees – in that he too was either ignorant of or went along with Hutchings' regime of corporate abuse if for a much shorter period?

Newlands appears to be more concerned with those anti-Hutchings executives who might have eased his predecessor's exit by leaking information to outsiders such as former stockbroker Robert Tennant-Ralphs, who attempted to organise a coup earlier this year. This may explain the suspension of three senior executives, news of which – just as in bad old Hutchings days – mysteriously materialised in the usual two Sunday business sections (the *Times* and *Telegraph*) which were favoured to herald Tomkins developments.

Meanwhile supine City shareholders wait for the results of the Ernst & Young probe into the multi-million excesses allowed by the Tomkins board during Hutchings' reign. Will this answer such interesting questions as who authorised and paid for the rumoured investigation carried out into Tennant-Ralphs by corporate investigators Risk Advisory Group?

Another much bigger question concerns the role of Hutchings' partner in abuse of the company cheque book, Ian Duncan, the former Tomkins finance chief who describes his interests as "flying helicopters, field sports, scuba diving, the arts, travel". All pastimes Tomkins appears to have indulged him in on a grand scale.

Duncan quit last year with a generous payout suspected to be £650,000. This looks suspiciously like "hush money" as he seemingly approved much of the lavish lifestyle he and Greg enjoyed at company expense. But how was that payment justified by the Tomkins board, which included Wambold and Holland plus similar still serving Hutchings rubber stamps Anthony Reading, David Snowdon and Richard Marchant? Was it ever queried by new boy Newlands when it came to approving the last annual report and accounts? Perhaps those who nodded it through looked forward to similar largesse when their time came to depart the Tomkins trough? No doubt Duncan is enjoying similar generous perks at his new employers, US venture capitalists Compass Partners.

In typical American style so far only some US investors are willing to adopt towards Tomkins the "kick the bums out" approach reserved for fat cat Washington politicians at election time. Perhaps if the only untainted director – former TSB Lloyds boss Sir Brian Pitman – takes over that will happen, starting with Wambold, Holland and Newlands.

LIKE Hutchings, who was a graduate of the Hanson academy, Sir Christopher Lewinton, the soon to be former chairman of TI Group, learned about corporate excess in the heady days of the 80s. Like Hutchings, Lewinton also seemed to ignore that times had changed. Only pressure from outraged shareholders persuaded Lewinton to more than halve his £6m golden goodbye due on the merger with Smiths Industries. The still generous £2m-plus in turn is thanks to a two-year contract when City good practice is supposed to dictate only one year.

But then Lewinton graduated from US conglomerate Allegheny International whose "don't spare the shareholders" policy dictated by chief executive Robert Buckley included an Allegheny air force of private jets, luxury homes, cheap loans and grand entertaining. The Allegheny scandal broke in 1986 soon after Lewinton swapped running the US group's British operations for TI.

THE noose around *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan continues to tighten with the help of his former friends and investment advisers, City Slickers Anil Bhoyrul and James Hipwell.

Confirmation from internal emails that "Moron" did discuss with the Slickers his purchase of Viglen Technology ahead of their *Mirror* tip that made him £20,000 – contrary to what he and his employers Trinity Mirror had maintained to the Press Complaints Commission – is one more possible plank in an expected prosecution.

But it is not just *Mirror* emails that are now in the hands of the Department of Timidity & Inaction. There are also the tapes – in the Viglen case said to be ambiguous, perhaps because the speakers knew the whole world was listening – between "Moron" and his broker at Kyte Securities, Antony Laiker. Similar tapes have no doubt also been handed over by the Slickers' brokers Redmayne Bentley.

What emails and tapes indicate is the remarkable extent to which "Moron" share picks and Slickers' tips were very much a case of life imitating art or vice versa. "Moron" passed on tips – from Laiker or other City friends – and faster than you could say "fill yer boots" they were in the *Mirror*.

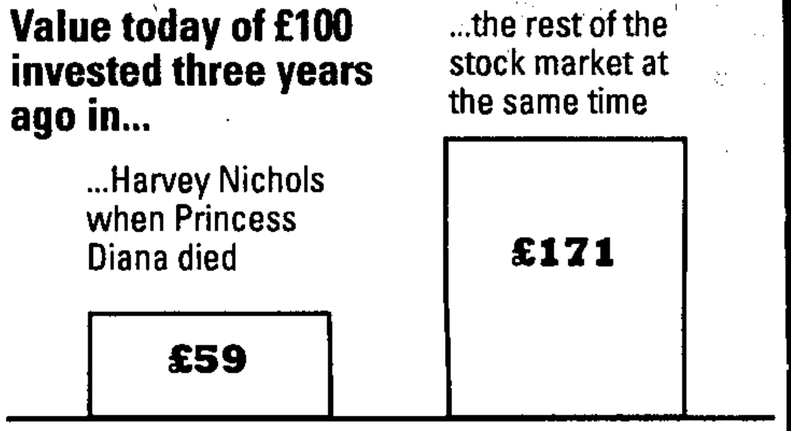
Bhoyrul and Hipwell received tips from their circle of "pump 'n dump" experts which they passed on to their biggest fan, their editor, before first loading up then letting *Mirror* readers into the secret.

NXT, Corporate Executive Search as well as Viglen and possibly Pace Microtechnology are shares in which "Moron" played and the Slickers "puffed". There could well be more. After all, "Moron" was also, the e-mails reveal, a shareholder in Reuters, run by Sir Christopher Hogg, the husband of *Mirror* columnist Miriam Stoppard. "Moron" became a shareholder before the price collapsed last year. "Moron" changed an offensive description of Hogg by the Slickers to make him a "City genius". He is said to have bought £20,000 worth of Reuters shares before the price crashed from £9 to £5. The price later recovered towards £16.

Trinity Mirror claims "Moron" has revealed all his share dealings to it. These have also no doubt been shared with the DTI. Any prosecution of the Slickers is certain to reveal those details to a wider audience along with the ever increasing number of Viglen-style "coincidences" with *Mirror* tips whether "Moron" is in the dock or the witness box.

Stock Horror

Harvey Nicks, missing its best customer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...the rest of the stock market at the same time
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GOOD to see that Nicholas Oppenheim continues to be able to put his past problems with the Inland Revenue behind him and pursue his City career unhindered. Post Northern Leisure, Oppenheim recently grabbed control of Allied Leisure and is planning an AIM listing for his company Georgica.

Oppenheim became the target of an Inland Revenue investigation as a result of allegations made by bankrupt former stockbroker Jonathan Bekhor. His firm A.J. Bekhor had acted for Oppenheim.

Bekhor – who informed often maliciously on his clients to save himself – told the Revenue he had acted for a circle of City figures including Oppenheim who had used Bekhor to deal through Switzerland. Bekhor claimed he had handed Oppenheim £750,000 in a briefcase at Zurich airport after withdrawing the cash from a Swiss account.

Oppenheim denied he had engaged in any undeclared share-dealing but admitted he had received the briefcase of cash from Bekhor on behalf of a Swiss middleman who represented certain non-residents. This explanation was accepted by the Revenue along with a secret settlement by Oppenheim regarding the tax liability for his agent's role.

MAN of property Elliott Bernerd's enemies, who sadly always seem to outnumber his friends, delight in exaggerating the seriousness of his recent cancer operation in New York and what it means for the future of Chelsfield. What it could mean, however, is a possible comeback into the Bernerd fold of his long time faithful fixer and keeper of the secrets George Devlin, who is said to have been holding Elliott's hand in New York.

Devlin left for Switzerland after cashing in at least some of his Chelsfield chips on quitting the board.

Meanwhile their old chum Roger Seelig is said to be no longer close. How ungrateful, if true, given the help both Elliott and George gave when Roger faced an unpleasant prison sentence over his role in the Guinness share support operation. But then Elliott did give evidence against Roger even if George was there in court holding Roger's hand to make sure they all remained friends.

'Slicker'

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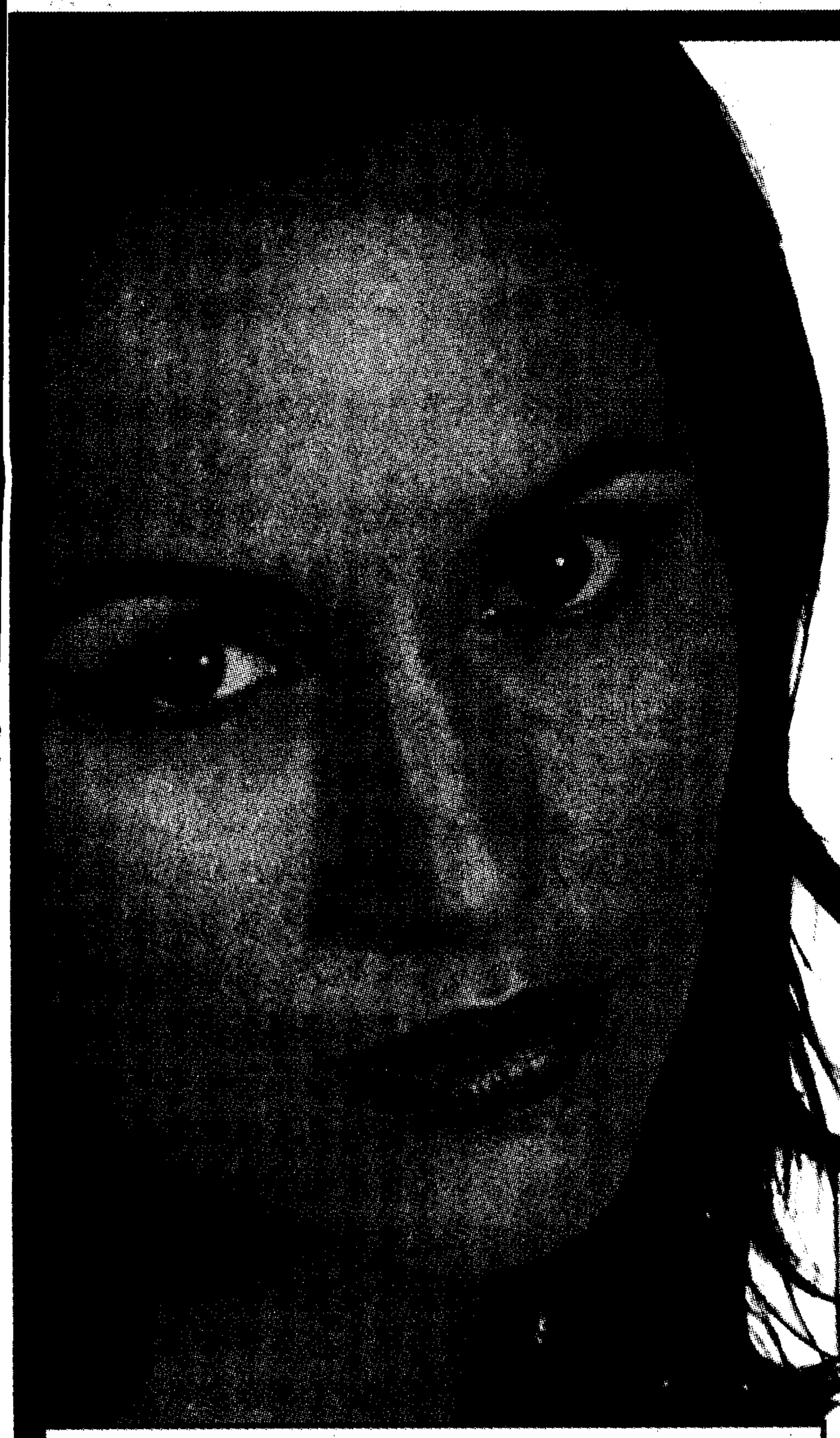

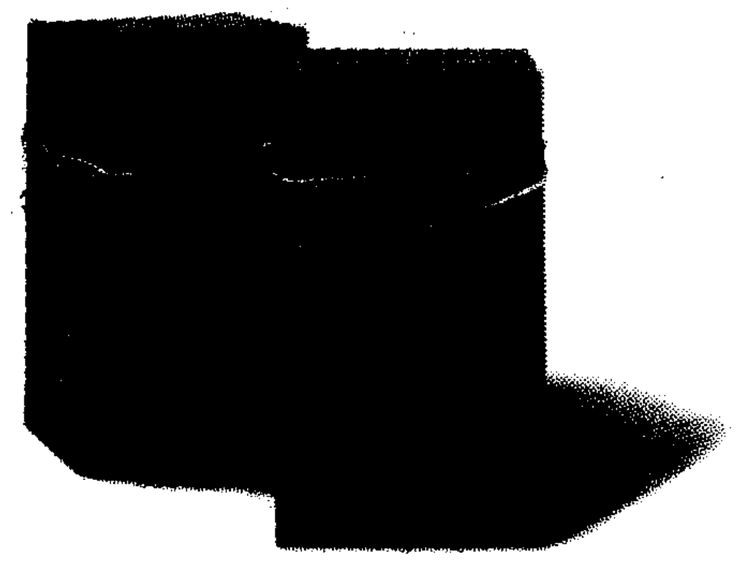

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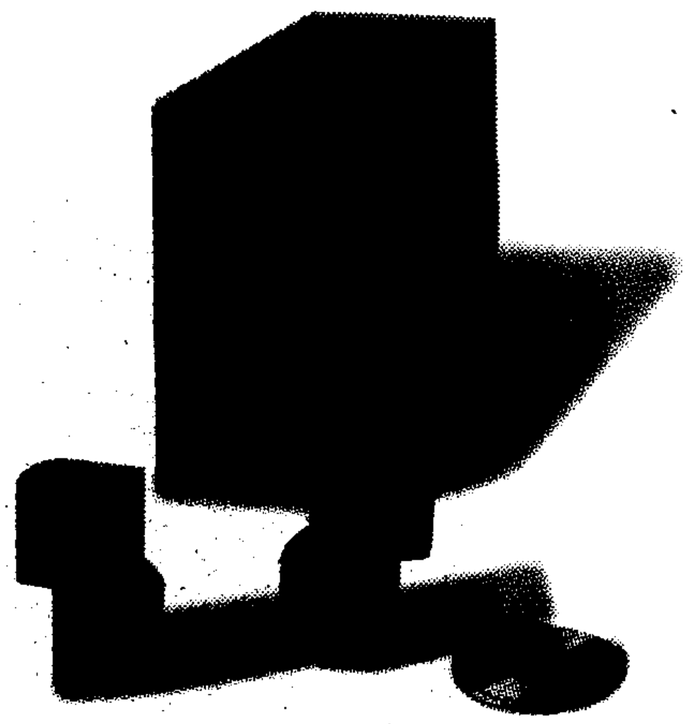

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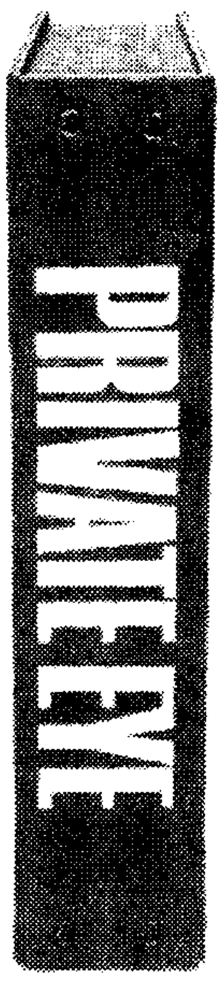

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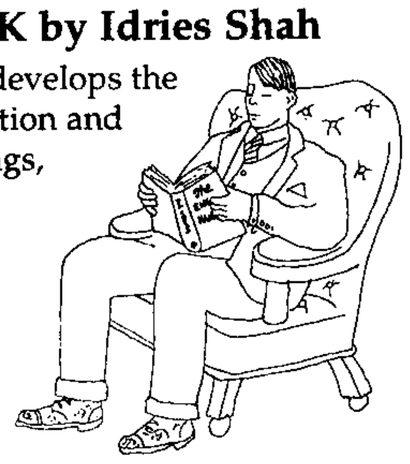

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WELDER. HM Naval Base, Gibraltar. For small weld (2mm & rising) on cooling system to Trafalgar Class Submarine. No previous experience required. Good benefits package, including possible reallocation to Devonport or Faslane. Salary; negotiable, depending on exposure to ionising radiation (any risk of which is hereby formally denied and traversed seriatim). Please submit CV and draft Nuclear Accident Health Safety Case to Ministry of Disinformation (MOD) 00 350 5****.

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EYE FINANCE

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FLIGHT OPTIONS – telephone booking service. Tel: 01432 851062, Fax: 01432 850722, HENRY ROGERS, ATOL 3793.

EYE FIND

HILAIRE MARIE MORRISON. Glasgow/Edinburgh 1971/2. The letters you wrote me way back then. I would like you to have them. Phone 01675 462902.

EYE CONTACT

EYEDEAL relationships – everywhere. Write MEL (IAMHRE) CW95HL. Tel/Fax 01606 49093.

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THAI CONNECTION – 600 marriages, 8 hours video, £15. 43 Trowbridge Gardens, LU2 7JY. Brochure: 01582 481725.

HEDONISM PARTIES. Adult Clubnights. Holidays. Attractive, uninhibited, funloving party animals. Couples, singles. S.A.E. Box 24405 London W5 5ZE. 09099 100185 (75p/min) – www.hedonism.org.uk

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EYE LOVE

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THIRTY SOMETHING, tall, dark, attractive, blue eyes, gsoh, even solvent. Given up meeting the right girl – seeks curvy female thirties or forties for uncomplicated fun. London. Box 2015 or – or_estes@hotmail.com

DO YOU ENJOY country walks with dogs, relaxing on the hearth-rug, going to the theatre? Our attractive fair-haired client, herself professionally qualified and financially secure, seeks a good-humoured, down-to-earth male companion in the Harrogate area, aged 45-55. There are no fees for introducing you! For information, please contact Jan Laine, THE STERLING PARTNERSHIP, on 01484 441281 – www.SterlingPartnership.com.

Replying to a PRIVATE EYE SMALLS BOX NUMBER? Address your reply like this:

Box No. . . .
PRIVATE EYE
Communications Team
Exmouth House
3-11 Pine Street
LONDON EC1R 0JH

MARRIAGE SOUGHT by very attractive, divorced, intellectual, white lady, 42. Box 1915.

BORING OLD FART, 60+ – seeks young woman to produce an heir for his estate. Box 0815.

MALE, 49 years, seeks female, between 40-60 years, for hot, steamy afternoon meetings. Photo appreciated. Stirlingshire areas. Box 1515.

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accidentally married man
(I'd give it another year),
38, almost handsome,
active in the media,
seeks clever, funny, almost pretty,
active in general,
accidentally tempted,
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or, like me, somewhere in between,
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meaningful relationship
involving belly-laughs and banter.
Contact lenses
and odd habits welcome.
Late evenings on
07776 277877.
MIKE
Email:
yesterday29@hotmail.com

EDINBURGH-BASED caring guy, 28, wltm dark Asian lady, 20 to 35, for fun and educated chats. Photo please. Box 0215.

SUPER CHAP, 35, attached, seeks similar female for lots of fun – superchap2000@hotmail.com

DEPRAVED UNEMPLOYED rat catcher, 44, seeks horny strumpet. Box 0115.

HANDSOME, Manchester married male, mid-thirties, seeks sensuous siren seeking secret assignations. Box 1015.

TWO OUT OF TOWN gentlemen wish to share occasional evenings with attractive lady friends who enjoy food, fun – not to mention the vino. Box 1315.

IF YOU ARE SLIM, attractive, intelligent, 40-55 and would like to enter into a non-platonic relationship with fit mid-fifties male (south east), please send letter/photo to Box 0415.

REFINED AUTHORITATIVE male, 58, protective and caring, WLTM naughty unassuming lady for regular discreet meetings and outings. East Anglia. Box 0314.

ATTRACTIVE, ELEGANT young Italian lady WLTM successful, considerate businessman for possible relationship. Picture appreciated. Box 0315.

NICE LOOKING early 40's attached professional seeks well built lass, 25-45 – for discreet fun liaison. London/SE. Box 0715.

HOTEL FOOD SUCKS. London girl sought by attached businessman (40) to turn on the bright lights – peter_pan@fsmail.net

ATTRACTIVE attached 40 yr old male seeks gorgeous petite female with laughter lines, a warm heart and cold hands. E-mail: wsc_1@hotmail.com

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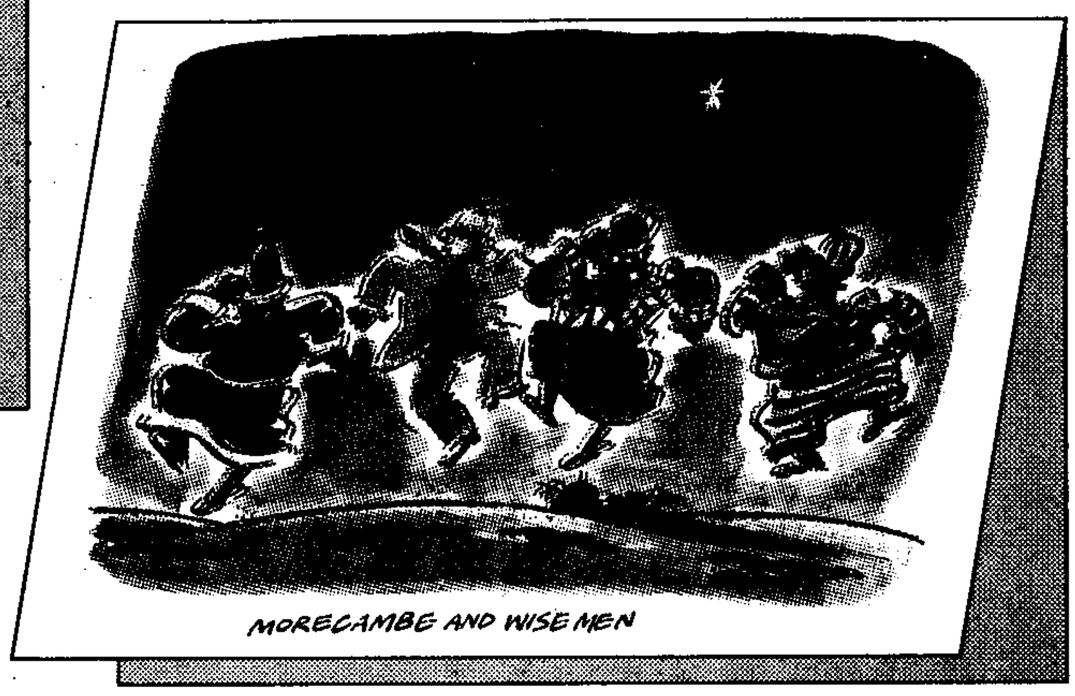
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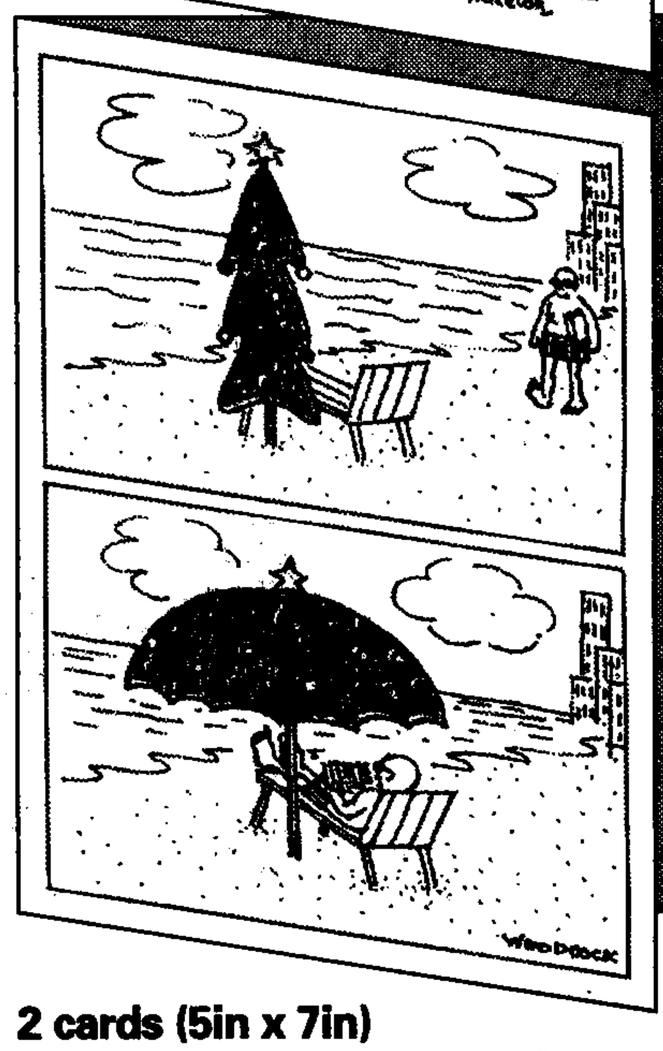

6 cartoon cards by 'Eye' cartoonists: de la Nougerede, Dredge (2), Grizelda, Larry and Woodcock – and this year they are in **FULL COLOUR!**

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